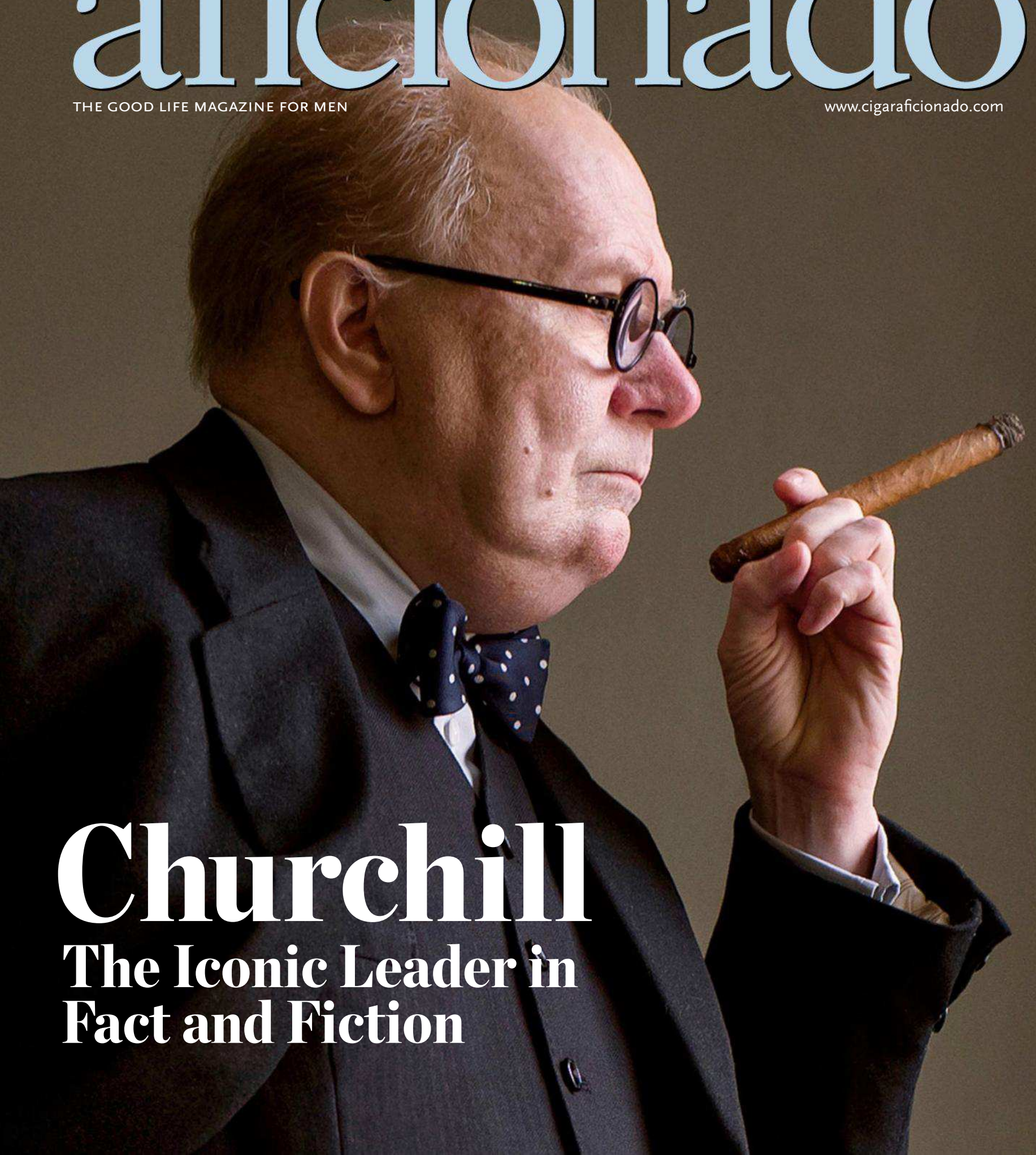


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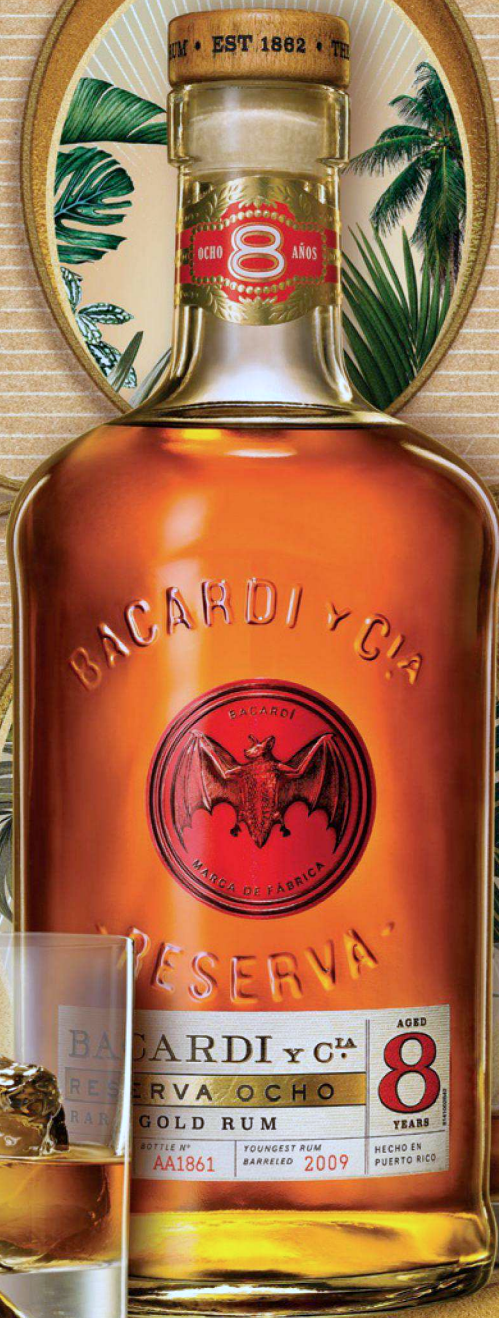
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DISCOVER



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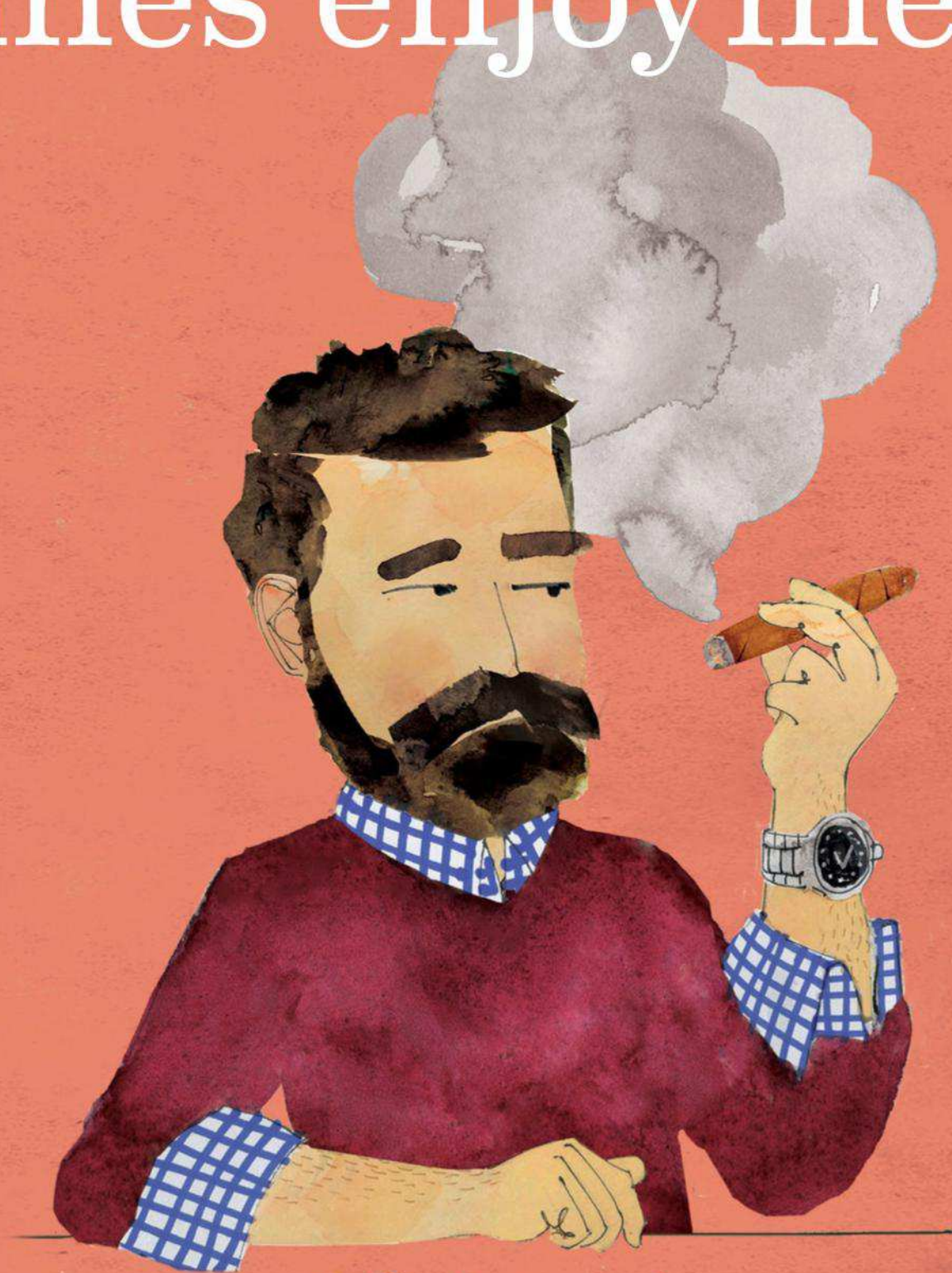
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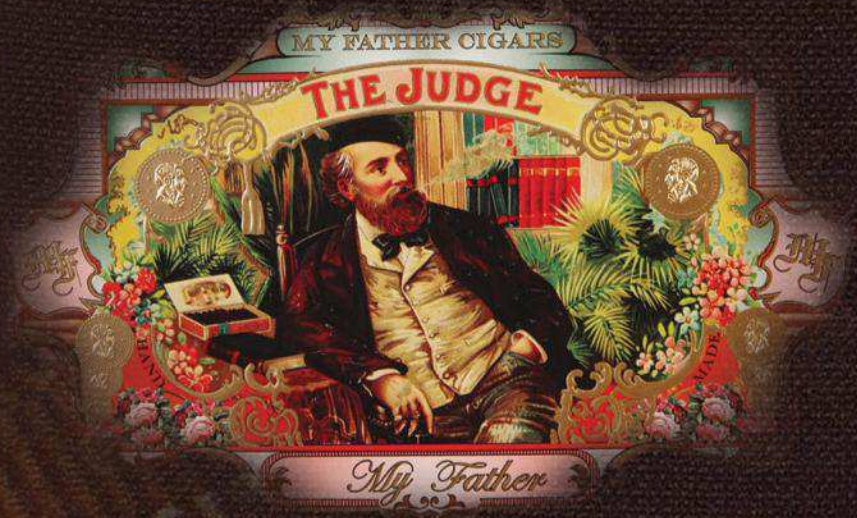
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may/june 2018

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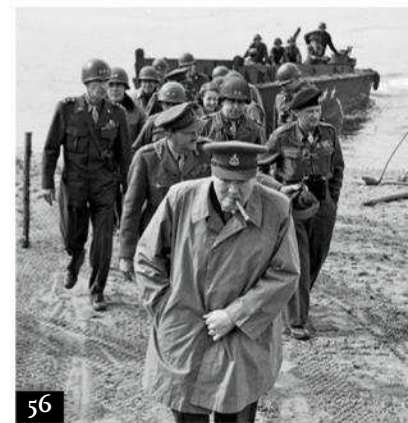
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ON THE COVER

Gary Oldman suffered hours in the makeup chair to play Churchill. His reward: smoking hundreds of cigars.

PURSUE THAT WHICH AWAKENS YOU.



THE **ALFA ROMEO STELVIO**

La meccanica delle emozioni



81 CUBA'S GIFT TO A PRIME MINISTER

A look at the historic humidor given to Churchill by the nation of Cuba that is now enshrined in the collection of Marvin R. Shanken.

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CIGAR AFICIONADO returned to Miami for a second annual Big Smoke event. Partiers indulged in cigars, cocktails and frivolity at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach.

128 MOMENTS TO REMEMBER
Photos from our readers as they enjoy themselves and their cigars.

136 MADE FOR YOU
Slippers for the cigar-and-cocktail crowd; the gift of a Man Crate; Japanese cuisine in a box; a motorized mountain bike; aerating your wine in a vortex; and an Old Fashioned glass that holds your cigar.



highlights

Thirty-five. That's the number of cigars that scored 90 points or higher in our newest tasting, outstanding on our 100-point scale. The corona gorda category led the impressive pack with nine cigars breaking the 90-point mark. So this issue of CIGAR AFICIONADO is a great place to start if you're searching for a nice smoke to welcome summer.



TOP PETIT CORONA

PARTAGÁS CORONA JUNIOR (TUBO)

CUBA

94

The highest-scoring smoke in this tasting comes in a bright yellow tube with red dotted lines and proves that smaller cigars can indeed produce loads of flavor.



TOP ROBUSTO

JFR LUNATIC SHORT ROBUSTO

NICARAGUA

93

An offshoot of Casa Fernandez's JFR (Just For Retailers) brand, this short but stout smoke is the smallest size in the Lunatic line extension.



TOP CORONA GORDA

MY FATHER LA OPULENCIA TORO

NICARAGUA

93

Rollled by the Garcia family, this larger toro shared the top spot in the category with two Cubans: the Cohiba Siglo VI (Tubo) and H. Upmann Connossieur B.



TOP FIGURADO

PARTAGÁS SERIE P NO. 2 (TUBO)

CUBA

93

Housed in a hip, black-and-red aluminum tube, this pirámide is rolled in Cuba and was added to the brand's lineup in 2005. The tubes came a few years later.



TOP CHURCHILL

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 NO. 1

NICARAGUA

92

This thicker, box-pressed smoke tied with the Enclave Broadleaf Churchill, another Nicaraguan cigar, for the top spot in the Churchill category.



TOP GRANDE

NAT SHERMAN METROPOLITAN SELECTION HABANO GORDO

NICARAGUA

90

This line extension debuted in 2016 as a bolder, Nicaraguan puro counterpart to the company's mainstay, milder Dominican Metropolitan Selection brand.



BEST BUY

PROJECT 805 PETITE CORONA

DOM. REP.

91

This smoke from Ventura, which costs only \$4.99, uses a bit of andullo tobacco, a unique type of leaf that has been compressed into small logs to ferment.



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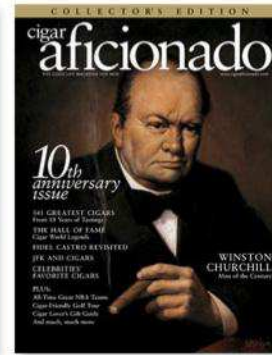
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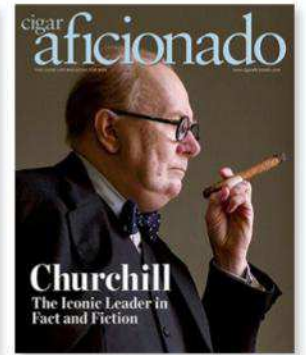
editors' note



AUTUMN 1993



DECEMBER 2002



JUNE 2018

Winston Churchill—The Reader Favorite

More than 100 people have appeared on the cover of CIGAR AFICIONADO: movie and television stars, sports legends, famous people of all types. Winston Churchill stands apart. He's arguably the most important figure from the past 100 years of world history, and one who clearly resonates with our readers. When we asked our audience to vote on their favorite cover in celebration of our 25th anniversary in December, Churchill won the contest handily.

This is the third time he has appeared on our cover, and you'll note that this appearance is a different one, for the image of Churchill you see now is one of the actor Gary Oldman in his makeup for the movie *Darkest Hour*.

If you haven't seen the film, go see it as soon as you can. It's a stunning achievement, and Oldman's Oscar-winning performance is nothing short of amazing. It's the remarkable tale of how Churchill—cigar always at the ready, drink never far away—stood alone and steadfast against the Nazis in World War II. When he was named prime minister in May 1940, the German army seemed invincible, and Britain stood alone, staring across the narrow English Channel to a continent ruled by a country intent on destroying democracy and Western civilization itself. Many argued he should sue for peace, but Churchill never budged. His refusal to cower before such a mighty enemy single-handedly changed the course of history.

Inspired by this marvelous film, we set out to create our most comprehensive look at Churchill ever. We turned to Jon Meacham, winner of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for biography and author of the 2003 book *Franklin and Winston* (about the friendship between

Churchill and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt). Meacham's story, which begins on page 56, shows how this great man rose to the occasion when all seemed lost, and illustrates his remarkable prowess leading the British through the Second World War.

Next we have Marshall Fine taking a look at what Oldman endured to bring Churchill to the big screen—hours each day in the makeup chair, for starters, and smoking a dozen Cuban cigars each day during filming. We also see how other actors from Richard Burton to John Lithgow have brought this great man to both the large and small screen.

We also examine Churchill's enormous consumption of cigars and libations. Experts Lee Pollock of The International Churchill Society and Rob Fox of James J. Fox (where Churchill bought many cigars) separate fact from fiction.

Finally, for the first time, you'll read about the historic humidor presented to Churchill in 1941, with a plaque reading "from the democracy of Cuba." That humidor came filled with 5,000 seven-inch-long, 47 ring-gauge cigars, a size that would later be given the name Churchill.

We invite you to light up a handmade Churchill cigar, pour yourself a glass of whisky and read all about one of the most interesting men ever to walk the earth.

MARVIN R. SHANKEN
EDITOR & PUBLISHER

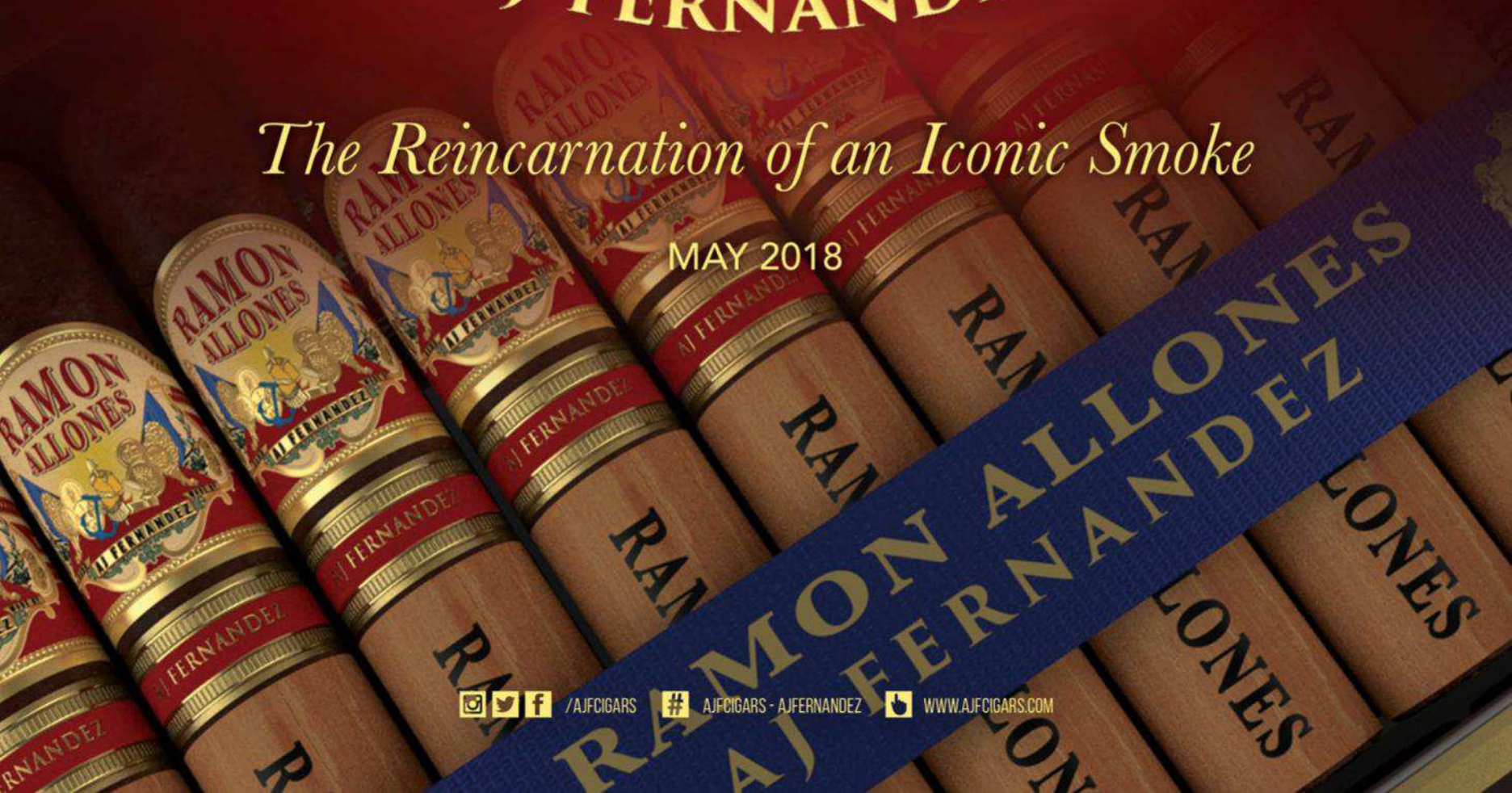
DAVID SAVONA
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



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MAY 2018



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out of the humidor

Dear Marvin,

Ryan Oliphant of Phoenix, Arizona, wrote that right, wrong or indifferent, he learned while growing up that successful, professional men enjoyed Scotch and cigars [“Out of the Humidor,” February 2018]. This side of the pond, cigars have traditionally been enjoyed with brandy, where it is the brandy glass, or balloon, that has been the eye-catching accessory, not the decanter.

In view of Sir Winston Churchill being the readers’ choice for the most popular CIGAR AFICIONADO cover, perhaps his choice of drink should also be recalled. He would toy with a weak whisky, described by one of his private secretaries as “Scotch flavored mouthwash,” for hours on end. The whiskies were sipped sparingly until lunchtime, when he enjoyed a pint bottle of Champagne (usually served in a silver tankard) with his meal. Later, he might drink vintage wine at dinner, and Port and brandy with his cigar afterwards.

My own preference, after being introduced to cigars in Cuba back in 1997 (as well as to your wonderful magazine), remains for premium rum, plus—as I write this on St. Patrick’s Day—Irish whisky. But then I have a sweet tooth.

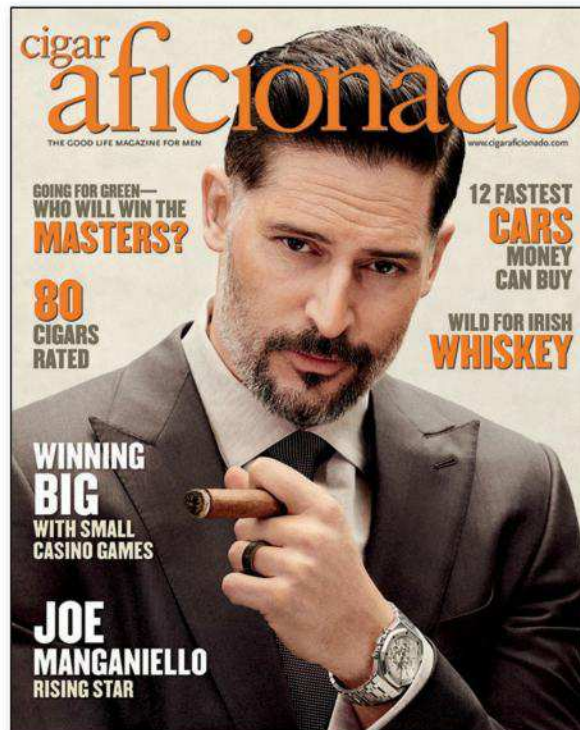
Malcolm Watson

Welford, Berkshire, United Kingdom

Editors’ Response: We enjoy all manner of drinks with our cigars. Scotch and other whiskies are a favorite, especially on cold, winter nights in New York. When we travel to cigarmaking countries, premium rum is the natural call. And there are, of course, times when we don’t drink alcohol while we smoke, and then the natural pairing is a great cup of coffee. We’re so happy to hear you invoke the name of Sir Winston Churchill, as he is the focus of our cover package in this particular issue. Turn to page 56.

Dear Marvin,

It excites me to see that you have decided to add a strength field to the already comprehensive tasting section. I smoke maduro cigars almost exclusively as I prefer a medium to full body and the palate that maduro wrappers



“It excites me to see that you have decided to add a strength field to the already comprehensive tasting section.”

—Currin Brown, Camino, California

offer. This new field gives me a new appreciation to what other levels of strength bring to the smoker and the experience a smoker can anticipate.

I have been smoking cigars since January 2017, and this new field teaches me about the dynamics that Connecticut, Habanos, Corojos, Sumatra leaf, as well as Cameroon bring. Thank you for remaining faithful to your tried and true rating fields, yet stretching out with class, adding a layer of appreciation to the smoker, new and seasoned, of which cigars out there provide a mild or fuller smoke experience.

Currin Brown

Camino, California

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E-MAIL letters@cigaraficionado.com • **LETTERS** 825 8th Ave., 33rd floor, New York, NY 10019 • **EDITORS’ BLOGS** Find out what the editors of CIGAR AFICIONADO are thinking—and smoking—in our editors’ blogs. David Savona, Gordon Mott, Jack Bettridge, Gregory Mottola and Andrew Nagy want to hear from you. The conversation is taking place on cigaraficionado.com.

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Printed in the U.S.A.

A publication of M. Shanken Communications, Inc.
Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10019
212/684-4224 fax: 212/684-5424 e-mail: letters@cigaraficionado.com

VOL. 26 NO. 4

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Dear Marvin,

I've been an on-and-off cigar smoker since 1992. I consistently find the prices of cigars in smoke shops much more than the prices you list in your magazine and website. In the Editors' Note in your March/April issue, it mentions that the tasting coordinator buys at retail from shops for your tasting panel. One of many examples is a recent purchase of an Ashton Symmetry Belicoso, which made No. 6 of the best cigars of 2017. You list the price as \$12.25. I paid \$16.50 in two different smoke shops. If what the editors wrote is true, why such a big discrepancy?

Fernando Picciano

Hawthorne, New York

Editors' Response: The prices you see printed in each issue of CIGAR AFICIONADO are manufacturer's suggested retail prices. And they are just that—suggestions. They don't include state tobacco taxes, which can have an enormous effect on the price of a cigar, especially if you're in a state with high tobacco tariffs such as California or your home state of New York. There are other factors—high rent for example, or limited product availability—that can also have an impact on prices, as ultimately, the retailer has the freedom to charge whatever price he or she feels appropriate for a cigar. Due to the fluctuations of tax, and other factors, the only verifiable and consistent price we can list for a cigar is the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

Dear Marvin,

Your article "2017 Year in Review" [April 2018] should be mandatory reading for any aspiring rookie cigar aficionado and for the seasoned veteran.

Playing the probabilities to get the best quality stick for your money rather than blind loyalty to a specific brand is a smart (and quick) way to make an informed choice at your local tobacco retailer.

Jim Tomlinson

Rochester, Minnesota

Dear Marvin,

Gordon Mott's article "Cuba: 25 Years Later" [December, 2017] brought me back to my visits to the island in the 1990s. The Soviet pullout had left the regime on life support, as evidenced by the government permitting the populace to use American dollars again. Imagine the sour look on the faces of Communist Party hierarchy members who had to trade currency with visages of George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant and Ben Franklin.

Ordinary Cubans were fine with it; their relatives in Miami were sending the greenbacks.

Bill Iezzi

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania ❖

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The winning team at the tenth annual Els for Autism Pro-Am is presented their trophies by event founders Marvin R. Shanken (center) and Ernie and Liezl Els (far right). From left, Jeff Branson of Bacardi, Sean Eckhardt of Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits, pro golfer Robert Allenby, and Ryan Bibbo of Bacardi.

A Million Dollar Day

THE 10TH ANNUAL ELS FOR AUTISM PRO-AM RAISES
\$1.1 MILLION FOR A VERY WORTHY CAUSE

BY DAVID SAVONA

The man in shorts smiling and casually smacking balls onto the range at the Old Palm Golf Club practice tee is the winner of a record 18 major tournaments, one Jack Nicklaus. Right next to the Golden Bear, Nick Price, himself the holder of three major titles, is striking pure shot after pure shot. And a few spots down, displaying less skill, but no small amount of enthusiasm, a group of eager amateurs tunes up for a day that brings both long drivers and duffers together for a worthy cause: the 10th annual Els for Autism Pro-Am.

The faint pop of Champagne bottles being uncorked can be heard over the breeze as the steady smack of steel clubs

striking dimpled balls resonates again and again. The heady occasion calls for a toast, and soon Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine and one of the founders of the Pro-Am, picks up the microphone and calls the group over to the practice green.

The 22 teams, each of them headed by a professional golfer, surround Shanken and pro golfer Ernie Els, for whom the charity is named. A team of bagpipers begins to play. By the end of the day, birdies would drop, friendships would be forged, cigars would be puffed and \$1.1 million would be raised for a worthy cause, pushing the 10-year total raised at this event to \$10 million.

"It's 10 years. It's hard to believe,"

Shanken had said at the opening dinner on Sunday night. Held on the grounds of the Els Center of Excellence, the school in Jupiter created with the funds raised by this Pro-Am, that event showed the crowd why they were here. The site is a hub of education and information for autism, one of the most serious developmental disorders affecting children in the world today. Joining Shanken on stage was Els and his wife Liezl, whose son Ben has autism and is a student of the school.

It was an all-star field of pros. Joining Nicklaus, Els and Price were Rory McIlroy (who would go on to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill the following weekend with a score of 18 under par), Charl Schwartzel, Louis Oosthuizen,



Rory McIlroy showing good form on the green.



Legends of golf Nick Price and Jack Nicklaus.



Ernie Els, the Big Easy, swinging on the course.



The campus of the Els Center of Excellence in Jupiter, Florida.

10 Years to \$10 Million

Pro golfer Ernie Els wins the Honda Classic in March 2008, his first PGA victory in four years. After the tournament, he reveals to the world that his son Ben—at the time five years old—has autism. Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO, reaches out to Els, and suggests creating a pro-am to help find a cure for autism. On March 23, 2009, the first Els For Autism Pro-Am is held.

It raises more than \$500,000. Pro-Ams follow each year, and in March 2014 ground is broken on the Els Center of Excellence. The first students begin school the following August. In March 2016, Rickie Fowler hits a \$1 million hole-in-one at the Pro-Am. In August 2017, the school is expanded with the addition of the Upper School. Today, some 260 autistic children attend the Els Center of Excellence.



Fox's Bret Baier smacking a ball during the tournament. Former NYC mayor Rudolph Giuliani is at right.



A Champagne toast and a salute by bagpipers brought the Pro-Am to a festive start on March 12 at Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.



Ernie Els with children selling lemonade for autism charity on the course.



Marvin R. Shanken, Ben Els and his mother Liezl. Ben inspired the charity.

Thomas Aiken, Peter Uihlein, Cameron Tringale, Robert Allenby, Heath Slocum, Jamie Lovemark, Keegan Bradley, Branden Grace, Tony Finau, Rory Sabbatini, Camilo Villegas, Bud Cauley, Peter Malnati, Marc Leishman and Jon Curran.

Refreshments were provided by Grey Goose, Ketel One and Belvedere vodka, Herradura Tequila, Glenlivet Scotch and Wines of Australia. For the many cigar smokers on the course, fine cigars abounded. Alec Bradley offered a broad range of its cigars, including the Alec Bradley Prensado (a former CIGAR AFICIONADO cigar of the year), Coyol and Tempus Natural. La Flor Dominicana had plenty of its La Flor Dominicana Coronado Double

Coronas, Oliva Cigar Co. had Serie V cigars and Padrón cigars offered a choice of the milder Damasos or stouter Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series Exclusivos. At the dinner the night prior, a cigar lounge was offered, featuring cigars from Arturo Fuente, EPC Cigar Co., Joya de Nicaragua and Villiger.

It was a friendly day, and two teams tied for the lowest score, each shooting a 56 in a best-ball format. In a tiebreaker, victory went to the team headed by pro Robert Allenby and consisting of Jeff Branson and Ryan Bibbo of Bacardi USA, and Sean Eckhardt of Southern Glazer's. Johann Rupert, CEO of Richemont, golf pro Louis Oosthuizen, Rurik Gobel and

Scott Mahoney came in second.

"It's things like this that put life into reality," Allenby said after the event. "What Ernie and Liezl are doing is mind-blowing. They're all about helping others, and the school is unbelievable. It's beyond what anyone dreamed. I play in a lot of these, and I always feel privileged to be part of it."

"You work hard, you're busy, but to take the time out and contribute to a cause like this makes it all worthwhile," said Jeff Branson of Southern Glazer's.

"You're changing lives," Els said to all the golfers at the luncheon concluding the event. "When we moved here, Ben didn't want to go to school. Now he loves to go to school. Thank you very much." ❖

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY,
FROM OUR FATHER
TO YOURS.

Elijah Craig

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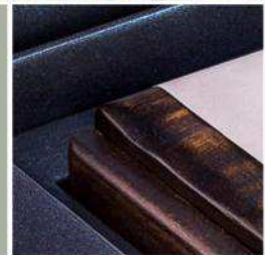
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good life guide

Living well demands that we indulge in things that are of superior quality and excellent origin. This guide aspires to find and recommend the best of everything to aficionados of the good life.

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Post Hotel & Spa, Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada

One of the best luxury ski resort hotels in the world, the Post is a winter fantasy—and it's even better in summer. The location could not be better—the hotel sits smack in the middle of Banff National Park, Canada's first and oldest (1885), a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is even more popular in summer than winter. Nearby Lake Louise is an icon of the natural world, an impossibly blue alpine lake set between glaciers and towering peaks. It's a place for both strenuous activity and utter relaxation, and in both cases, guests relish the hotel's elaborate Temple Mountain Spa.

Snow brought the developers—ski instructors André and George Schwarz—here. But the brothers found a new passion when they bought the Post Hotel in 1978. They quickly began reinvesting all their profits in building a wine cellar and since 2002 the Post has held *Wine Spectator's* highest honor, the Grand Award of Excellence, with its more than 2,300 labels and 25,000 bottles. Over the past four decades, the siblings have made nonstop improvements, successfully transitioning from world-class ski instructors to world-class hoteliers with a world-class resort.

The Post is surrounded by hiking trails of all lengths and abilities, a wide variety of guided climbing and mountaineering is available, road cycling is popular, there is whitewater rafting and excellent fishing on the famed Bow River. Bicycles are available for guests, and almost every visitor takes scenic drives

through the pristine park. Canada's most famous golf course, Banff Springs, is just 45 minutes away.

It's easy to love the Post, with its European flair, sumptuous rooms, impeccable staff, cozy goose down duvets, and extravagant cuisine—the main restaurant is a must-eat destination for all visitors to the area. It also has the more casual traditional Swiss Fondue Stübli, and a charming cellar pub. All 89 spacious rooms boast alpine architecture and have jetted tubs, and more than a third are luxury suites. Five freestanding cabins sit along a small river for privacy and luxury.

But the reasons so many loyal fans come back year after year are the hosts and the setting. The Schwarz brothers circulate around the dining room each morning and evening, ensuring perfect service. Longtime staffers remember preferred tables, cocktail choices and how you like your coffee.

With the Lake Louise ski resort (139 trails on 4,200 skiable acres) just three minutes away, its own skating rink, 120 miles of cross-country ski trails, and activities like dog sledding, sleigh rides and snowmobile tours, the Post is still a great winter destination. But you'll want to return all year long for a full slate of deluxe treatments, including state-of-the-art fitness center, a Roman-style saltwater pool, whirlpool baths and steam room.

Rates start at \$275 a night for rooms and \$500 for suites.

Visit posthotel.com

—Larry Olmsted



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The Frame By Samsung

The first time I visited Samsung's Manhattan showroom to test out The Frame television, I breezed right past the display. And that's precisely the point. The Frame isn't just another dull, black rectangle that mounts on the wall and clashes with your décor. Rather, it's a seamless, artful approach to how we experience television.

Yes, The Frame delivers a stunning 4K picture with a wide range of inky blacks and brilliant whites, boosted by HDR technology. And, like any of today's smart TVs, it streams the usual cast of content providers: Amazon, HBO Now, YouTube and Netflix.

But when The Frame isn't displaying television shows or movies, it becomes the picture itself by elegantly exhibiting professional artwork or personal photographs. 'Art Mode,' as Samsung calls it, is what makes The Frame an innovation, as it transforms the flat-screen TV from a dreary appliance you try to conceal into a gallery-like art display you're proud to show off.

To cover a range of aesthetic tastes, Samsung has amassed an impressive art library of about 600 pieces (and counting) for The Frame, including works from famous collections such as New York City's Museum of Modern Art and St. Petersburg's Hermitage museum. Video images of individual art pieces can be purchased for about \$20, or you can subscribe to the full

collection for about \$5 per month. If you desire a more personalized touch for your wall, The Frame allows you to upload and save your favorite photographs or art pieces, with a range of faux-matte framing options available.

When in Art Mode, a sensor measures the ambient lighting, automatically adjusting the brightness and color temperature of the artwork within The Frame's display, further preserving the natural look so it seamlessly blends into your living space. A motion sensor also shuts The Frame completely off to help conserve energy.

Samsung has also designed other clever methods to strengthen The Frame's artsy illusion. The TV can be housed in four bezel types—white, matte black or light and dark wood (each sold separately)—that resemble real picture frames. Additionally, The Frame hangs flush to the wall via its No Gap Wall Mount, and the supplied Invisible Connection cable, which is nearly translucent, eliminates any messy wires with one single connection to external devices.

The Frame is available in three sizes: 65 inches (\$2,799), 55 inches (\$1,999) and 43 inches (\$1,299).

Visit samsung.com/us/frame-tv/

—Andrew Nagy

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To'ak Chocolate

There's never been a better time to be a chocolate lover. Raw materials are selected and processed with more care, and the fine chocolate market for both plain and flavored bars has blossomed. Now, a new movement is rediscovering cacao varieties (chocolate's plant source) long thought extinct. Several different intrepid chocolate pioneers have been rooting around the tropics and testing the genetics of promising old and often abandoned cacao plants. When they find something distinct and delicious they isolate it for production.

One of these people is a Chicagoan named Jerry Toth, a rain-forest preservationist in Ecuador. Working with local farmers, Toth stumbled across *Ecuadorian Nacional*, a strain of cacao that was prized for its natural sweetness more than 100 years ago.

It had been decimated by disease, then hybridized with other more hearty varieties. Until recently it was generally assumed that 100 percent Nacional was extinct.

In a remote valley called Piedra de Plata, Toth's group found some singular trees, and made some chocolate from the pods. The distinct qualities led them to tag the trees and take samples for genetic testing. A number of samples were 100 percent Nacional. Imagine if someone discovered a hidden valley that was home to a herd of cattle untouched as they reproduced for 100 years—cattle long believed to be extinct?

The cultivation has two purposes: first to make chocolate and second to share plants with others, once the crop is established.

To'ak is the brand name. Available bars change depending on the season. Releases tend to be small, and they hold some of the product for aging. Quality has improved greatly since I first tasted them three years ago. Broadly speaking, you can expect them to be fruity—especially dark fruit and raspberry—and sweeter than expected for the cacao content (most hover around 80 percent; all contain only cacao and cane sugar).

All come in a handsome locally made wooden box with a booklet on the project and tweezers for tasting. Each bar has a whole cacao bean fixed to its center, which is a fun way to taste the raw material. And at \$270 for a 50-gram bar, every comment on them leads with some form of “most expensive chocolate ever.”

The purity movement among connoisseurs that shuns vanilla in coffee, single-malt cocktails and flavored cigars notwithstanding, Toth et al. are running some compelling experiments. Lozenges of the chocolate were dumped into a Laphroaig cask and aged for two years, then remelted and molded into bars. It's kind of dazzling. There's a filigree of smoky savory whisky over a fruity and honeyed bar. The chocolate flavor is direct, but the whisky and smoke gain on the finish with the effect of being like a sip after a bite. You know you're in Islay, and a long way from booze-filled bonbons.

Visit toakchocolate.com

—Owen Dugan





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American Brandy

Hear the words “exceptional brandy” and you probably think Cognac or Armagnac. While both have impeccable credentials, a growing cadre of domestic makers challenge them with brandy styles that showcase an American spirit of innovation, and unapologetically refuse to copy France. “It’s not Cognac made in America,” says Joe Heron of Louisville’s Copper & Kings. “We make American brandy.”

The trend—both craft and mainstream—is enjoying burgeoning sales and interest from mixologists. Part of the charm is that, unshackled by laws and traditions, they use a free-wheeling ethos, experimenting with grape varietals and aging methods. “We have just a ton of flexibility compared to what’s going on in Europe,” says Paul Ahvenainen, master distiller of Korbel. “There’s no reason we can’t produce some really top-notch product.”

American brandy is nothing new. Settlers made it almost upon their arrival—on both coasts. In the 19th century, domestic product challenged Europe’s, which was devastated by insect infestation. Alas, after Prohibition the industry struggled. The rebirth started in 1982, when Hubert Germain-Robin and Ansley Coale obtained a still from Cognac and started recapturing artisanal methods lost to modern French brands. They also used high-priced pinot noir grapes. “Our 30-year-old product is better than Cognac,” says Coale. “We were using better grapes.” The XO (80 proof, \$120) has delicate balance with vanilla, caramel, cardamom, dark fruits, fudge and a long finish.

Copper & Kings turned to ex-Bourbon barrels to age its Butchertown Brandy (124 proof, \$55) made with muscat, chenin blanc and colombar grapes. The Bourbon-like brandy has notes of vanilla, maple, caramel and fruit. Christian Bros. chose to pursue the bottled-in-bond distinction (see story, page 93) for its Sacred Bond (100 proof, \$18). Korbel V.S.O.P. (80 proof, \$14) taps such grapes as colombar, pinot noir, chenin blanc and zinfandel to make a nuanced spirit with notes of crisp cinnamon graham cracker, caramel, vanilla and apple.

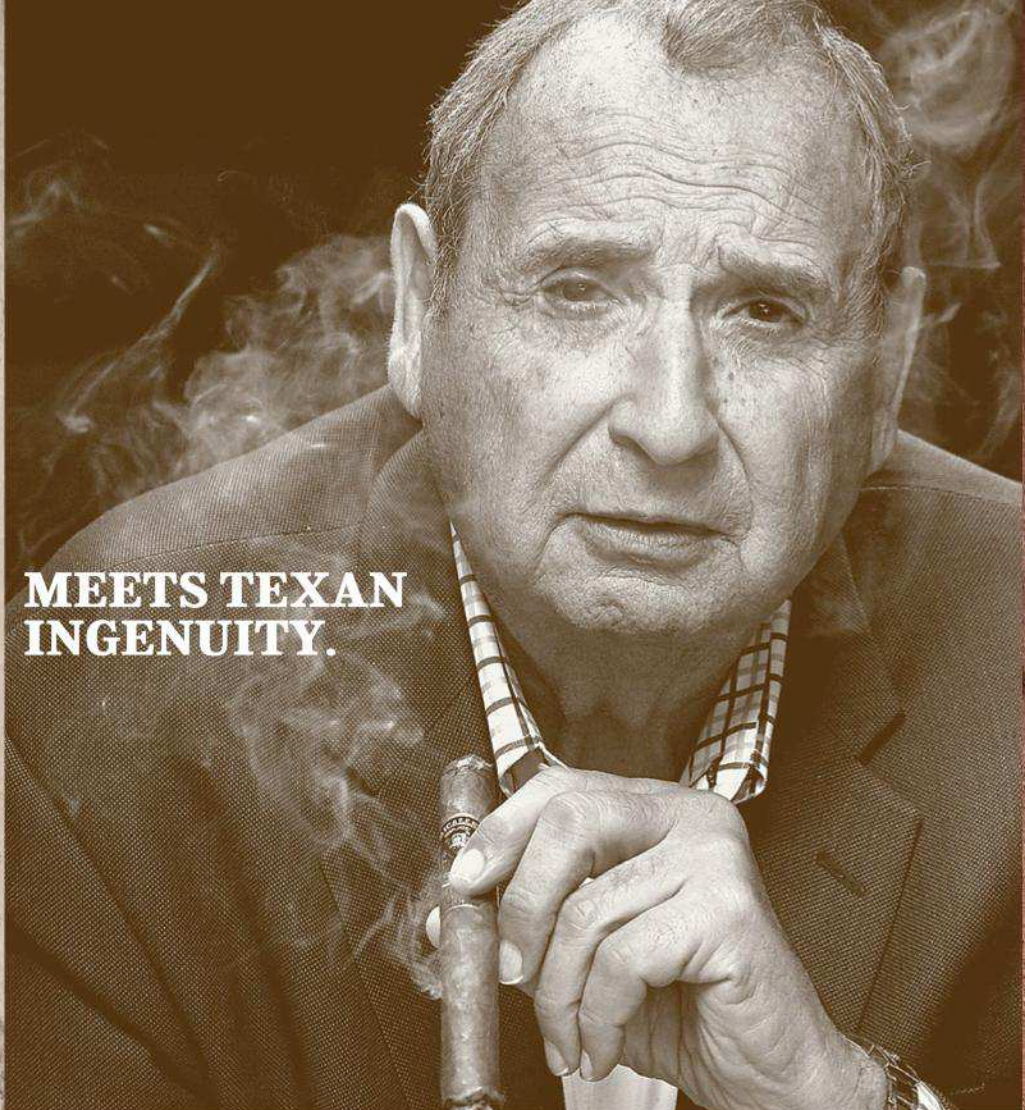
And the American brand snifter is still but half full. Expect the quest for innovation to continue full force.

—Jack Bettridge





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Bulgari Octo Maserati GranSport and GranLusso

“Maserati and Bulgari have a lot of elements in common—we have the same clients, the same passion for beautiful things and the same attention to details,” Fabrizio Buonamassa, Bulgari’s head of watch design, says as he guides a Maserati Levante SUV along Southern California’s serpentine Route 74, one of the most dangerous highways in the state. His résumé reveals another connection between the car and Bulgari’s new Octo Maserati GranSport and GranLusso: in an earlier life, Buonamassa was a designer for Maserati’s parent company Fiat, so he was prepared to apply his experience in automotive design to the new Octo Maserati GranSport and GranLusso watches.

“They are two different souls of the same brand,” says Buonamassa of the timepieces, with faces that read like tachometers. The GranSport (\$12,800) has a slick profile with its black DLC-coated steel case and a matte black lacquer dial. The GranLusso (\$30,700) is a refined take in 18K pink gold with an anthracite dial. Otherwise, the two 41-mm watches are made entirely in-house and are powered by the automatic BVL 262 movement, with retrograde minutes and jumping hours. Both versions are outfitted with an integrated, perforated and stitched strap that

evokes the look of the Maserati upholstery.

Maserati’s trident logo appears on a dial for the first time. Above it, the hour is set in an aperture at 3 O’CLOCK. Bulgari chose the jumping-hour movement to echo the rev counters on the brand’s dashboard. The indexes mimic the stylized font seen on the gauges. A single hand moves in a linear fashion up the left side of the dial to count off the minutes from zero to 60 before snapping back and starting again as the hour disc advances.

Given the strong Italian heritage and bold design ethos celebrated by both brands, this particular watch/automotive marriage, established in 2012, seems more harmonious than similar partnerships. “Maserati invented the GranTurismo segment in the 1950s,” says Buonamassa. “It was a different experience—it’s more luxurious in comfort compared with other brands that just make racing cars. And Bulgari makes something like this—we produce the thinnest watch in the world, but the design is also not so common. So Maserati and Bulgari have this kind of approach—not just performance, but also a taste for beautiful things.”

Visit bulgari.com

—Laurie Kahle

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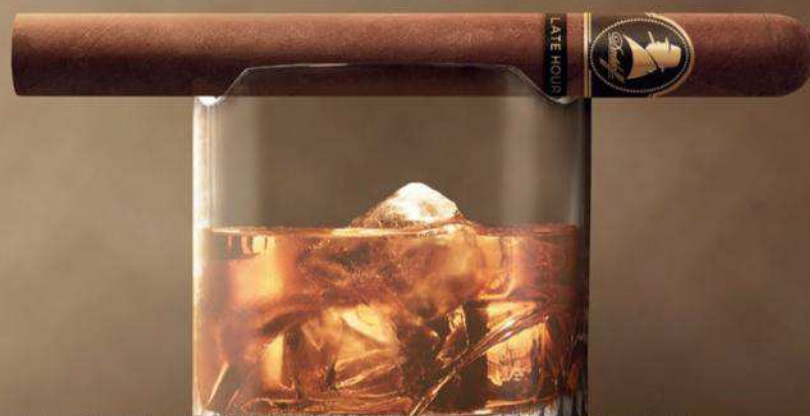
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2018 Lexus LS

If you go by the standards of “tradition” and “heritage” that luxury brands frequently tout, Lexus, with its 1989 debut, is little more than an upstart. But it quickly upended the established order in recent years, routinely ranking among the U.S. market’s top-selling high-line marques.

While much of the credit goes to the wildly popular RX crossover utility vehicle, the LS has long symbolized everything the Lexus brand stands for. Now, it aims to enhance the appeal of its flagship with an all-new 2018 remake. And so, like its German competitors, the fifth-generation Lexus sedan is loaded with the classic symbols of luxury—leather and wood—in even more craftsman-like detailing and added a raft of high-tech infotainment and safety gadgets to boot.

But Lexus also aimed at something for which it was not traditionally known: a far more passionate—if polarizing—design. It starts with what the brand calls its “spindle grille.” The car’s yawning, toothy maw cannot be missed, whether spotting it parked or seeing it surge up in your rearview mirror. Meanwhile, the traditionally slab-sided LS is curvaceous and angular, with a coupe-like roofline that enhances its elegant proportions.

Of the two versions of this year’s sedan—the LS 500 and LS 500h—the latter features a fuel-efficient hybrid powertrain that can deliver up to 33 mpg on the highway. While Lexus was the first to offer this green option in the full-size luxury segment, the bulk of its buyers will likely stick with the standard powertrain

package. For the 2018 remake, Lexus also broke tradition, opting to shift away from the classic formula for full-size luxury that has long required V-8, and even V-12 power. Unless a buyer is insistent on counting cylinders, it shouldn’t matter. This twin-turbo V-6 makes plenty of power—and even delivers a satisfying exhaust note under full acceleration, though the LS otherwise remains nearly tomb-quiet, as has been the brand’s tradition.

As we discovered during a day’s drive through the mountains and valleys of California wine country, the 2018 Lexus LS is also a lot more fun to pilot than its predecessors, especially if you’ve opted for the F-Sport package that adds such niceties as an Active Stabilizer System that keeps the sedan firmly planted during aggressive cornering maneuvers. In tamer driving, you can relax with the updated infotainment system controlled by a touchscreen display. The Mark Levinson sound system, pumping 2,400 watts of audio out through 23 speakers, is one of our favorite options. But others might prefer the 22-way Business Class-style, heated-and-cooled, rear seats with five different massage programs.

Starting at around \$75,000, the new 2018 LS is a bit more affordable than its German rivals, but even for those unconcerned by price tags, it again proves Lexus can stand up with the best in the luxury automotive segment.

Visit lexus.com/models/ls

—Paul Eisenstein

Wilson Ultra Performance Tennis Racket

In olden days, when most tennis racquets were still made of wood, I could sometimes sneak a Bances or Te-Amo onto the practice court when the coach wasn't around. I argued that smoking a cigar while hitting tennis balls helped my stamina. Today, there's no smoking and few wood racquets on tennis courts. Technology has moved quickly over 40 years. Jimmy Connors played with a steel racquet. Arthur Ashe swept Wimbledon with a space-age blade made of a blend of graphite, tungsten, titanium and Kevlar.

Since racquets are more durable, larger and lighter, manufacturers need something new to sell. That's where Wilson Sporting Goods comes in with the latest "Ultra Performance Tennis Racket." The Ultra promises "effortless power on all shots from anywhere on the court." All the same power is necessary, but control is paramount. Your shots still have to land *inside* the lines. The Ultra helps there too.

With the Ultra 100 Countervail, the ball seems to stay on the strings a bit longer. This is "dwell time," and Wilson explains that its grommet system compresses at impact, what it calls a "Crush Zone." That, with the "Power Rib" design that adds stability and stiffness, should increase power, spin and accuracy. Wilson offers a study that found 40 percent more control from the Ultra.

The Ultra's balance is excellent, if a bit too head-light for my style. I found I swung through the ball too fast and so I put a little lead tape on the head, but I do that with all these feathery axes. For me, the most important feature of the Ultra is the vibration damping to which "Countervail" refers. It's a patented material directing "the ball's energy within the frame instead of the body." That study recognized a 30 percent reduction in "vibrational energy" from the racquet. That means my arm doesn't get as tired. Advanced players will appreciate this. Beginners will like the power. Hit a two-handed backhand? You'll dig the customizable handle.

All new racquets require adjustment. String the Ultra a little tighter as it tends to transfer energy into your shots. You might find you can shorten your strokes. That's good for older players like me who have lost some reaction time.

The Ultra comes in six versions from 97-inch to 110-inch head sizes. Prices start around \$189. No strings attached. Practice-court cigars sold separately.

Visit wilson.com/en-us/tennis/rackets/ultra

—Alejandro Benes



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The Hacienda Humidor

There are two types of desktop humidors—uninspired wooden boxes and works of art. The Hacienda Humidor from Brizard & Co. falls squarely into the latter category. It's constructed from vintage black walnut, a wood that's prized for its dark color, grain lines and hefty strength. Hewn from logs more than half a century old, each piece has its own rugged character with superficial knotholes, cuts, grooves and splits in the wood. No two are exactly the same. It looks at home in a villa by the sea or in a modern Manhattan high-rise with reclaimed wood furnishings.

The exterior features wrought iron hardware from Guadalajara. Two large rings connect to the body and a handle attaches to the heavy lid, which feels good and powerful in the hand. The hardware marries bold, utilitarian elements with elegant details. The bottom of the humidor is covered in distressed, full-grain leather, keeping it from sliding or scratching your table. Each Hacienda has a lock-and-key mechanism with leather tassel, to secure your cigars from prying eyes.

The interior is lined with Spanish cedar and features a notched airflow system in the wood—much like a raised grill—that allows for improved air circulation and humidity diffusion around the cigars within the humidor. The inside of the lid is magnetized, and each Hacienda ships with a magnetic hygrometer and one or two carved blocks of Spanish cedar, also magnetized, for securing Boveda humidity packets on the underside of the lid. The standard-sized Hacienda has two cedar Boveda holders. A smaller size includes one. Both models include Boveda humidity packets. When the packets run dry, replacements can be found at most retail tobacconists.

The standard version (\$895, pictured here) is 14 inches long by 12 inches wide by 5 inches high with a 75-cigar capacity. The smaller version (\$590) is 11 ¾ inches by 9 ¼ inches by 4 ¼ inches and holds 30 cigars. Measurements for both versions are approximate, and may be slightly larger or smaller due to variations in the wood. Both models are made in the United States.

The Hacienda is a unique statement piece with a robust, masculine aesthetic. And when you've had it with unoriginal, run-of-the-mill humidors, there's only one thing left to do—get a humidor that nobody else has.

Visit brizardandco.com

—David Clough





Touring Churchill's London

Perched beneath the sprawling facade of Her Majesty's Treasury building, a small entranceway leads visitors through a time portal to the epoch of the Second World War. It's May of 1940. The Germans have just begun their invasion of France. Beneath the worried streets of London a newly appointed prime minister arrives inside a secret underground bunker for the first time. He looks around the narrow corridors, removes a cigar from his mouth and declares, "This is the room from which I will direct the war."

Months later, as the Germans carried out a series of devastating air raids over the capital, it was here in the Cabinet War Rooms that Winston Churchill plotted the course for Allied victory. This historic space has been preserved exactly as it was during Britain's darkest hours, and it's now part of the greater Churchill War Rooms, a museum dedicated to the life of Sir Winston.

In the Map Room, visitors can see where military officials held daily briefings for the prime minister and King George VI. Walk around the corner and you'll see the BBC broadcasting equipment used by Churchill to deliver four wartime speeches. Then there is the Transatlantic Telephone Room. This area, which was disguised as a bathroom, contained a secret line to Washington that Churchill used to speak privately with President Roosevelt (as dramatized in the film *Darkest Hour*).

The attached museum presents a detailed account of Churchill's life, from a young man at military academy to an elder statesman

during his second tenure as prime minister. The museum also displays an impressive collection of personal effects, including Churchill's signature homburg hat, his preferred Scotch and Havana cigars, even the honorary U.S. passport that was presented to him by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

After the museum, stroll around the block to Parliament Square and visit the Churchill monument overlooking the Palace of Westminster. From there, it's only a short walk to the National Portrait Gallery, which houses some of the most famous depictions of the prime minister.

Ambitious tourists can also venture south about 25 miles to Chartwell, Churchill's country home. Much like the War Rooms, the estate has been preserved to offer a glimpse into the private life of Churchill. You will see the desk where he composed his famous speeches, his opulent study and his art studio with a large collection of paintings.

Back in London, The Churchill Arms is the perfect place to unwind after a day of sightseeing. The eccentric 18th century pub was frequented by Churchill's parents in their early days and renamed in the family's honor after WWII. It's loaded with Churchill memorabilia, as well as a selection of libations. The prime minister would approve.

Visit iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms

—Blake Driesch

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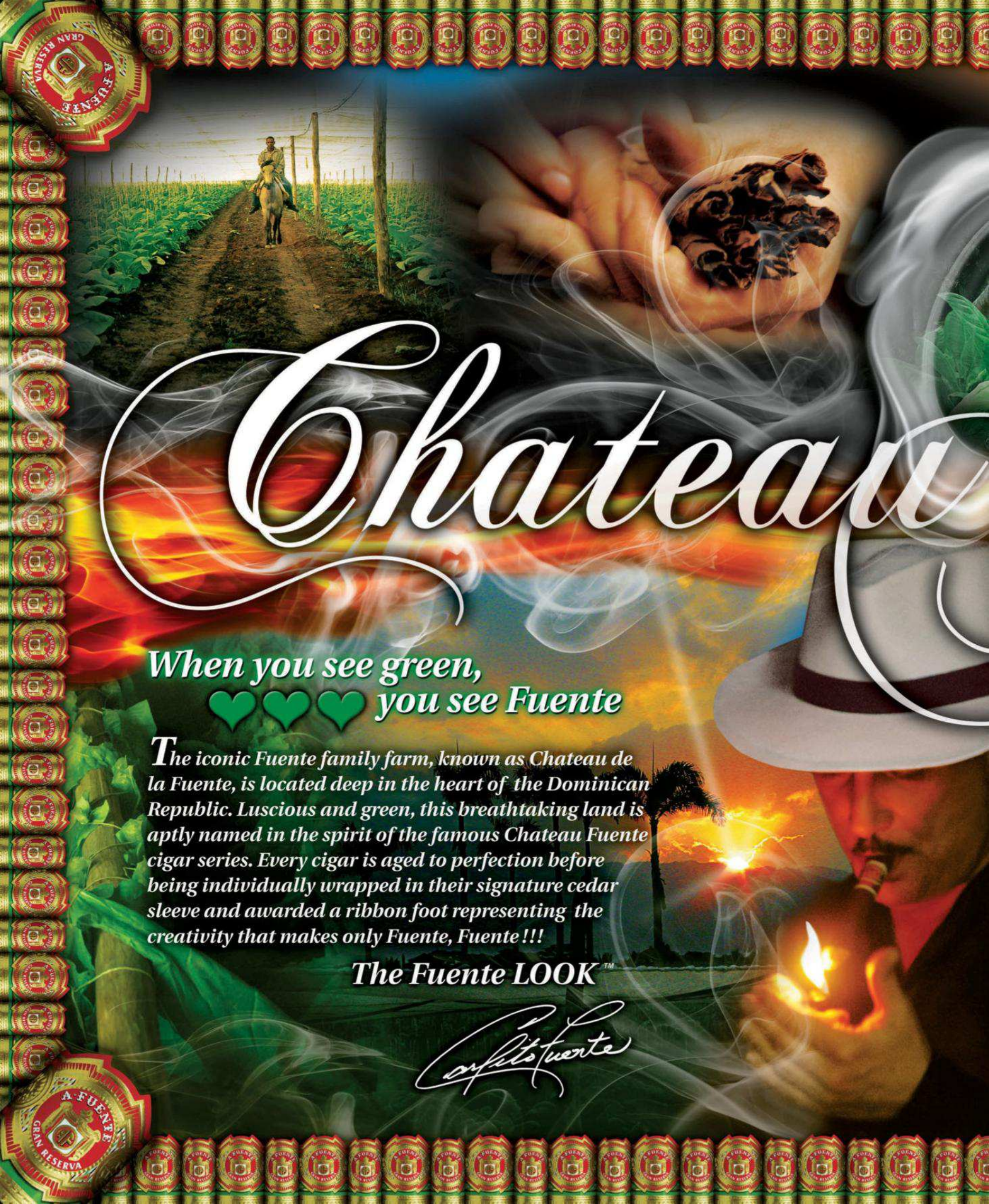
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WINSTON CHURCHILL PORTRAIT OF POWER

*How a man once doubted by so many
led Britain from the brink, becoming
one of the most respected leaders ever
to walk the earth* by Jon Meacham

His moment had finally come. It was Friday, May 10, 1940, and things could hardly have been worse. Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht was on the move in Western Europe, threatening to sweep across the ancient nations to the English Channel and then, for all anyone knew, to do what no one had successfully managed since William the Conqueror nearly nine centuries before: storm and subjugate England itself. In this bleak hour, Winston Churchill, now 65 years old, was summoned by King George VI to become prime minister and marshal the defenses of liberty against Nazi tyranny.

He believed in himself, even if the skeptics and the doubters were legion. He had long thought that his fate and that of his nation were intertwined. As he went to bed at about three o'clock that morning, Churchill recalled, he was "conscious of

Churchill flashes his famous V for victory sign in 1943, in the thick of the Second World War.



“We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have



Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin at the Yalta Conference of 1945.



The 1940 evacuation of Dunkirk.

a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial.” There was no fear, no uncertainty. “I thought I knew a good deal about it all,” Churchill recalled, “and I was sure I should not fail.”

Churchill, alas, was about the only one who was sure he would not fail. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt, then meeting with his Cabinet in Washington, learned the news from an aide’s scribbled note, he looked up and said that he “supposed Churchill is the best man that England had, even if he was drunk half the time.” In those early days, Frances Perkins, FDR’s Secretary of Labor, recalled that Roosevelt “was so uncertain about” Churchill that he wondered “what kind of a fellow” the new prime minister really was.

Roosevelt—and the rest of the world—would find out before long. Given his war leadership, particularly during the crisis of 1940, Winston Churchill became what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin would call “the largest human being of our time.”

Implacable in the face of Hitler, determined to stand alone, if necessary, and stare down the Nazi threat, Churchill won a permanent place in the pantheon of heroic leaders who have single-handedly shifted the course of history.

This is neither hyperbolic nor sentimental. Before Churchill, England, and the West writ large, was at risk of falling under what he once referred to as “all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule.” After him, liberty was saved, and the great story of individual freedom and the rule of law rolled forward. How did he do it? How did this man of whom so many thought so little in the beginning manage to survive and prevail?

There is, of course, no single answer; history doesn’t work like that. But from this distance—and mountains are usually better viewed from a distance—we are able to discern some of the key characteristics that made Churchill Churchill.

First, though, we must set the scene. Born in 1874 at his ancestral Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, the eldest son of Lord Randolph Churchill and Jennie Jerome Churchill (an American heiress from New York), young Winston led a lonely childhood.

You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea,

before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering.



Churchill and Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery cross the Rhine on March 25, 1945. Weeks later, the Germans surrendered to Allied forces.

SGT. MORRIS / IWM VIA GETTY IMAGES

His parents were nearly always absent, and he filled his days with dreams of martial glory, creating grand images of himself as a worthy descendant of his ancestor John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough. Winston came of age at the apogee of Victorian imperial reach, the days when it could be truly said that the sun never set on the British Empire. Educated at Harrow and at Sandhurst—the latter is the military academy of Great Britain, to

which he was sent, he recalled, because he was thought too stupid to become a lawyer—Churchill made himself famous in his early 20s as a soldier and war correspondent.

It was on one such expedition, to Cuba in the mid-1890s, that he acquired two lifelong habits: a love of the siesta and a passion for cigars. He would come to smoke as many as eight to 10 cigars a day, usually *Romeo y Julietas*, and he defended his habit with a

land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that

God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never

ferocity that would not have surprised the Axis dictators. Toward the end of World War II, Churchill was to host a luncheon for the king of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud. "A number of social problems arose," Churchill recalled. "I had been told that neither smoking nor alcoholic beverages were allowed in the Royal Presence. As I was the host at the luncheon I raised the matter at once, and said to the interpreter that if it was the religion of His Majesty to deprive himself of smoking and alcohol I must point out that my rule of life prescribed as an absolutely sacred rite smoking cigars and also the drinking of alcohol before, after and if need be during all meals and in the intervals between them. The King graciously accepted the position."



A speech made from the deck of a dreadnought, the symbol of Britain's naval power.

This witty but insistent disposition of heart and mind was a Churchill hallmark. And he needed both a sense of humor and an iron will to endure the vicissitudes of the political arena. Elected to Parliament just before the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, he would change parties over his long career not once but twice. (Anyone can rat, he would say, but it took real character to re-rat.) When he fell from power after the disastrous landings at Gallipoli in the Great War, Churchill rejoined his old regiment and went to fight at the front—a remarkable thing for a man in midlife.

Back in London in the interwar years, Churchill was seen as brilliant but erratic. Distrusted by the Tories with whom he had again enlisted, he was a passionate enthusiast, fighting lost causes ranging from the status of India (Churchill could not abide the

thought of surrendering such a vast part of the Empire) to the divorce of Edward VIII (Churchill was an unapologetic supporter of the ill-fated king). When he began to focus his formidable attentions on the rise of the dictators in Europe, he was dismissed in many quarters as a warmonger. The world was tired of conflict; the staggering bloodshed of the Great War had created a climate of pacifism that led many in England's ruling classes to see war as unthinkable.

To Churchill, alas, it was all too thinkable. He detected the Hitlerite threat early on, and he later thought of the 1930s as his years in the wilderness, warning vainly about the coming cataclysm. Isolationism reigned supreme in the United States; avoidance of uncomfortable geopolitical realities was the order of the day in London. Yet Churchill persisted, arguing again and again that the democracies must prepare for war against the dictators.

The German invasion of Poland in the opening hours of September 1939, code-named Case White, proved Churchill all too right. He was called back to the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty under Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who had long sought peace, and faced wavering support in Parliament. Under pressure, Chamberlain stepped down. With the German blitzkrieg to the West in April and May 1940, Churchill was at last given the office he had coveted from childhood: the prime ministership of his beloved nation.

His stewardship of the cause of Anglo-American liberty beginning in May 1940 is why men will speak of him with reverence, to borrow a phrase of his from another context, "as long as the English language is spoken in any corner of the globe." In those fraught weeks in May, he prevented the British from reaching out to the Axis with a peace feeler, telling his allies: "It was idle to think that, if we tried to make peace now, we should get better

terms from Germany than if we went on and fought it out... We shall go on and we shall fight it out, here or elsewhere, and if at last the long story is to end, it were better it should end, not through surrender, but only when we are rolling senseless on the ground." In his magnificent hour upon the stage, Churchill drew on three principles—principles that define his leadership and which still have much to teach us.

Courage. Churchill liked to quote Aristotle, who said that courage was the most important virtue, for it guaranteed all the others. He was indomitable in the face of near-certain defeat, insisting that Great Britain—and, in the fullness of time, the United States—had the moral reserves to stave off the mighty German

That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one

surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime.



A gifted orator, Churchill's speeches are the stuff of legend. Here, in 1945, he holds center stage during a meeting of Britain's conservative party.

KEYSTONE-FRANCE / GAMMA-
KEYSTONE VIA GETTY IMAGES

army, come what may. Addressing Parliament and the nation in the wake of the British evacuation at Dunkirk in June 1940, he spoke with a transporting poetic vision. "We shall go on to the end," he thundered, "we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing

grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

word: victory. Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror,

victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without

It was Periclean. And it worked. The British were willing to fight if they were certain their leaders were with them. The speech had its desired effect on another audience, too—the one across the Atlantic, headquartered in Washington. “We understood the kind of courage and tenacity that Winston Churchill was beginning to put into words,” Eleanor Roosevelt recalled, “words that expressed the spirit of the British people in the months following Dunkirk.”

FDR was beginning to think that Churchill might well be a man worth counting on. And that conviction grew out of the courage Churchill displayed as the weeks of 1940 fell away. In a letter to the American president, Churchill promised that “in no conceivable circumstances will we consent to surrender.” But, he warned, the worst might yet come to pass. “If members of the present Administration were finished and others came in to parley amid the ruins... no one would have the right to blame those then responsible if they made the best terms they could for the surviving inhabitants. Excuse me, Mr. President, for putting this nightmare bluntly. Evidently I could not answer for my successors, who in utter despair and helplessness might well have to accommodate themselves to the German will.”

The most compelling element here is Churchill’s pledge that he would die in the streets rather than be the one who struck a deal to surrender England to the Third Reich. This assertion—which no one who heard his voice could doubt—was essential to his success in this terrible period. At dinner one evening in June 1940 with his daughter-in-law Pamela, who was six months pregnant, the prime minister looked her in the eye and said, “If the Hun comes, I am counting on each of you to take one with you before you go.”

“But Papa,” Pamela replied, “I don’t have a gun, and even if I did, I wouldn’t know how to use it.”

“But my dear,” Churchill said, “you may go to the kitchen”—at this the prime minister raised his fist high in the air with a menacing gesture—“and grab a carving knife.”

Candor. Churchill believed in leveling with his followers. He also believed that the rest of the world tended to see the world as he did. In his cosmos there was joy in the journey; without darkness there could be no light. There was a fundamental democratic instinct at work, too: Churchill held out the possibility of heroism for all, not just great men. That was one reason he so often spoke of the “long story” of the nation—in that story there was room for greatness from the most ordinary of souls. “Trust the people” had been his father’s political motto, and Churchill shared it.

And the people deserved the truth, no matter how unpalatable. “There is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold out false hopes soon to be swept away,” he recalled. “The British people can face peril or misfortune with fortitude and buoyancy, but they bitterly resent being deceived or finding that those responsible for their affairs are themselves dwelling in a fool’s paradise.” People respected candor, Churchill believed, so long as

they believed their leaders had a plan for moving forward.

Roosevelt learned something from this Churchillian understanding of leadership. “The news is going to get worse and worse before it gets better and better,” FDR told Americans in the winter of 1942. “The American people must be prepared for it and they must get it straight from the shoulder.” It was, in a way, the covenant of democracy: Give it to us straight, and we will do what it takes. Such a view sustained Churchill through all the years of war, in defeat and in victory.

Cooperation. Churchill always knew he could not defeat Hitler alone. He needed America, and America was personified in FDR. “No lover,” Churchill once remarked, “ever studied the whims of his mistress as I did those of Franklin Roosevelt.” Alliances were crucial; without them things would fall apart.

At Harvard in 1943, Churchill accepted an honorary degree and laid out a vision of Anglo-American cooperation for the war and whatever lay beyond. “The price of greatness is responsibility,” Churchill told his American audience. “If the people of the United States had continued in a mediocre station, struggling with the wilderness, absorbed in their own affairs, and a factor of no consequence in the movement of the world, they might have remained forgotten and undisturbed beyond their protecting oceans: but one cannot rise to be in many ways the leading community in the civilized world without being involved in its problems, without being convulsed by its agonies and inspired by its causes.”

He would stand with the United States. “There is no halting-place at this point,” Churchill said. “We have now reached a stage in the journey where there can be no pause. We must go on. It must be world anarchy or world order. Throughout all this ordeal and struggle which is characteristic of our age, you will find in the British Commonwealth and Empire good comrades to whom you are united by other ties besides those of State policy and public need. To a large extent, they are the ties of blood and history. Naturally I, a child of both worlds, am conscious of these.”

The ties of blood and history: such was the marrow of Churchill’s leadership. He led greatly because he, too, was great—a man of wide and far-reaching vision, of unquenchable courage, of unbreakable will. His words have the power to shape us even now. In his final major address to the House of Commons, in 1955, in the depths of the Cold War standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, he said: “The day may dawn when fair play, love for one’s fellow men, respect for justice and freedom, will enable tormented generations to march forth serene and triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair.”

Wise words then, and now. ❖

*Pulitzer Prize winner Jon Meacham is the author of many books, including *Franklin* and *Winston*, about FDR and Churchill.*

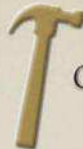
victory, there is no survival. ”

—from his first address to the House of Commons as prime minister, May 13, 1940

Farewell, Sir Winston. Churchill's funeral procession, 1965.





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THE ROLE OF A LIFETIME

For Gary Oldman and a host of other actors, playing Winston Churchill is a defining moment by Marshall Fine

Some historic figures leave giant footprints. Others cast a looming shadow. But when it comes to portraying Winston Churchill on film, it really comes down to his famous silhouette: the almost snowman-shaped figure in a three-piece suit, chin jutting over a short but corpulent body, topped by a homburg hat—and always with a cigar (of a size that came to be synonymous with his name) clenched firmly between his bulldog-like jaws.

When you take on the role of Winston Churchill in a film, as Gary Oldman did in his Oscar-winning turn in 2017's *Darkest Hour*, the question for the actor is always the same: Can you fill out the silhouette? And can you mount the role, undaunted by the fact that a number of acting greats have already taken a crack at this character, often hailed as the greatest Englishman of all?

It took Oldman the better part of a year to decide to play Churchill in *Darkest Hour*, and almost another year to do the research and makeup tests, before shooting the actual film. Already considered one of the greatest actors of his generation, Oldman earned a Golden Globe and a gaggle of critics' awards as the best actor of 2017, in addition to his Academy Award.

In fact, Oldman was offered three different Churchill film projects in the space of a year. Even as he wondered, "What are they seeing that I'm not?" he turned them down, saying, "Don't be utterly ridiculous." As the slim actor told *Deadline*, "When you start with the robust silhouette of a man like Churchill, with the big jowls and the double chin, it's hard to see that. You look at me and I probably could have a good go at Stan Laurel. Every time my manager brought it up, I'd say, 'I don't want to hear about it.'"

Gary Oldman, who won an Oscar for *Darkest Hour*, is nearly unrecognizable in his makeup.



It was director Joe Wright who convinced Oldman to take a crack at Churchill, telling him that if Oldman could find and embody Churchill's spirit, the rest would take care of itself. "When casting, you can either choose someone who looks right or someone who has the essence of the character. And I always think it's wiser to choose the latter," Wright told *The Atlantic*. "I wanted someone with a kind of intensity, and Gary has always had, and still has, that intensity as an actor."

Because Churchill remains someone whose image is inextricably linked with cigars, any actor who takes on the role must contend with the great man's unrelenting affection for full-sized, full-bodied cigars in any and all circumstances. For some of the portrayals of Churchill on film over the years, a little bit of on-camera cigar smoking has sufficed to represent the Churchillian

appetite for fine tobacco. Richard Burton's Churchill in 1974's *The Gathering Storm* is shown smoking in his garden, but rarely elsewhere. John Lithgow's turn as the prime minister in Netflix's "The Crown" indulges in cigars at dinner with the Duke of Windsor, and while wandering around his own living quarters in his dressing gown. Albert Finney has Churchill lighting up at the breakfast table and while playing cards with his wife, Clementine (played by Vanessa Redgrave) in his 2002 version of *The Gathering Storm* for HBO. Simon Ward, in the title role of 1972's *Young Winston*, lit his first cigar just as the film was ending. In the 2017 film *Churchill*, which focused on Churchill's battles with Eisenhower and Montgomery over the plans for D-Day, actor Brian Cox used real cigars as well as electronic cigars. "It was a brilliant design," Cox says. "I produced vast amounts of vapor and it looked just like smoke. I had vapor coming out of my nose and ears. The only time I had a real cigar was if I was lighting one in a scene. Churchill was smoking most of the time—and he had that round face, like a big baby. When I would see him with a cigar in his mouth, I thought he used the cigar a lot like a baby uses thumb-sucking. It was the perfect substitute."

Oldman, however, insisted on the real deal. Various reports say the actor smoked anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 in Cuban cigars over the course of filming *Darkest Hour*. Appearing on "The Graham Norton Show," Oldman claimed he'd smoked a dozen cigars a day for the entire 48 days of shooting. He said they cost \$50 apiece. According to Focus Features, the film's distributor, Oldman smoked Cohiba Siglos on the set. The Cohiba Siglo V is the longest Siglo (it's 6 3/4 inches long by 43 ring) and British shops sell them for £38.80 each, including taxes, or \$55 at current exchange rates. Twelve cigars a day for 48 days is 576 cigars, and at \$55 each that amounts to more than \$31,000.

The very first image of Oldman in *Darkest Hour* includes a cigar, which is seen as Churchill has his breakfast served to him in bed in May 1940, shortly before he is to be named prime minister. Even before his servant can pull the curtain to let in the light of a new day, Oldman's Churchill illuminates the darkness of his chamber with a wooden match, firing up a cigar in a billow of smoke, beginning dictation to his secretary practically before he's finished exhaling. He seems to smoke everywhere protocol (or chutzpah) will allow: in the car, on the toilet—even in the London Underground, where fellow riders in a subway car are surprised by his presence when he asks for a match. Only when he is speaking within the halls of Parliament itself does he seem to forgo the impulse to indulge in fine tobacco.

While he muscled through the cigar smoking required to play Churchill, puffing away repeatedly, Oldman knew that to be a real method actor about the role he would have to gain upwards of 80 pounds



Albert Finney as the puffing prime minister in *The Gathering Storm*.



Richard Burton did little to change his look when playing Churchill in 1974.



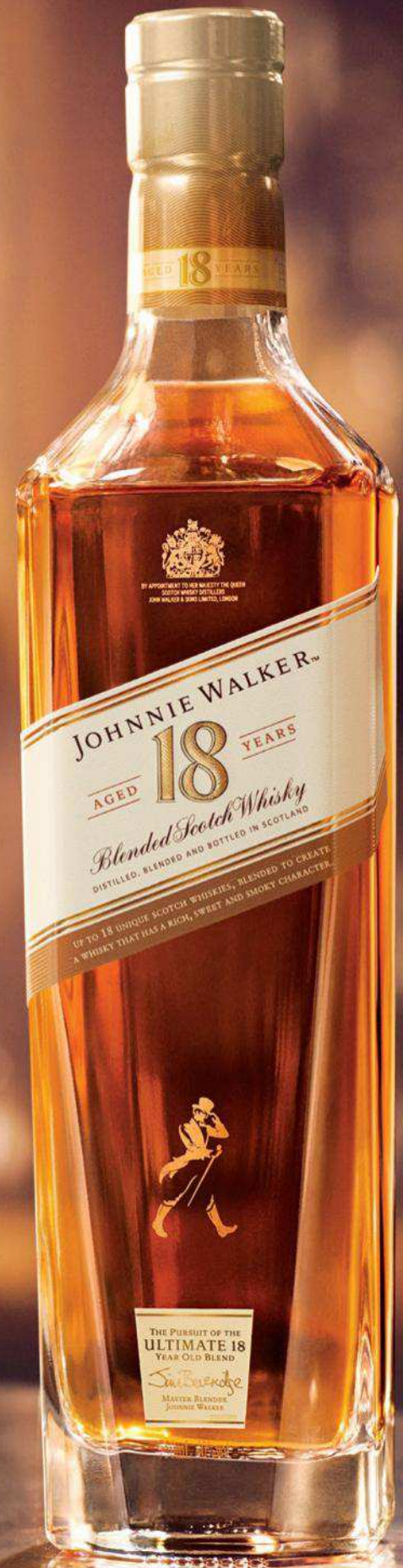
John Lithgow brings his cigar to dinner as Churchill in the Netflix series "The Crown."



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Oldman once didn't see himself as Churchill. "I don't want to hear about it," he'd say.

to approximate Churchill's girth. But, approaching the age of 60 himself, Oldman feared that he'd have a struggle to shed it afterward. So he reached out to Kazuhiro Tsuji, a special-effects makeup artist he knew who had retired from film after turning Eddie Murphy into the Klumps and Brad Pitt into Benjamin Button. At first dubious that he could hit the level of realism that Oldman sought, Tsuji came up with a blend of mask and headpiece of prosthetic rubber overlays that transformed Oldman's forehead and jowls. Tsuji also used silicone, foam and spandex to create a fat suit that mirrored Churchill's famous figure but weighed less than 20 pounds. (For his efforts, Tsuji and his team also won Oscars for Best Makeup.)

By his own estimate, Oldman spent a record amount of time both putting on and wearing the character makeup during the 48 days of filming. He faced days of up to 17 hours, starting with four hours in the makeup chair as he was transformed into Churchill. The filming was 10 to 12 hours, and after shooting all day, he had to spend another hour having the makeup carefully removed, to be used again the next day.

Others who have played the role were less assiduous about getting every detail right. In a 1974 Hallmark Hall of Fame adaptation of *The Gathering Storm*, Richard Burton portrayed Churchill—and looked like, well, Richard Burton. He refused to even shave his hair off, and told an American reporter that he

didn't really care how he came across in the drama because "he hated Churchill." He even went so far as to write a piece for *The New York Times* at the time, with the headline "To Play Churchill Is To Hate Him."

Still, Burton, who had met Churchill, wrote, "Whether Sir Winston Churchill was a genius, I don't know, but certainly he was one of the few people—two others are Pablo Picasso and Camus—who have frightened me almost to silence when we came face to face, a difficult task in my case...Churchill left me with the feeling that I was adjacent to a slow-effusing volcano. He had a kind of dynamic lethargy."

As someone who spent the entirety of his 20th-century life as a world-known public figure, Winston Churchill understandably pops up often as a character in movies about other historical figures, particularly films about both World War II and 20th-century British royalty. Churchill figures prominently in their stories, whether it's supporting King Edward's choice to marry an American divorcee (in the numerous films about his abdication of the throne) or helping Elizabeth II make the transition to the throne after her father's death in "The Crown." He has also figured in historical drama and fiction on film and TV, from mini-series such as "The Winds of War" and "Eleanor and Franklin: The White House Years" to series such as "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles," "Dr. Who" and "Peaky Blinders."



Kristin Scott Thomas as Clementine, and Oldman as Churchill.

No matter how major or minor a figure he may be in any given story, playing Winston Churchill is both a thrill and a challenge for any actor. Timothy Spall appears as Churchill in only a handful of scenes in *The King's Speech* (2010), encouraging Colin Firth's King George at the start of World War II, but he had to dig into the role. "You get to be asked to play him and you have to do your work," Spall told *The A.V. Club*. "When you're asked to play massively important historical characters, even though it was as a sort of adjunct, a cameo part, you have to pay respect. So I enjoyed the research." Spall went on to play Churchill once more, making a surprise appearance as the character in the memorable closing ceremonies of the 2012 London Olympics.

Yet Churchill's full life seems to be a subject too large for a single film or even miniseries to encompass. Sir Richard Attenborough's *Young Winston* took Churchill from school days through his adventures as a correspondent in the Boer War to his first election to Parliament at 26 in 1900. The 1981 British miniseries "Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years" (which starred Robert Hardy) covered the decade from 1929–39 when Churchill was out of power and watching with alarm as Germany rearmed. "I think the only way to deal with his whole life would be with a 10-part series, or maybe two of them," Cox says. "The challenge in playing him is in finding the man himself, because there are so many elements to him."

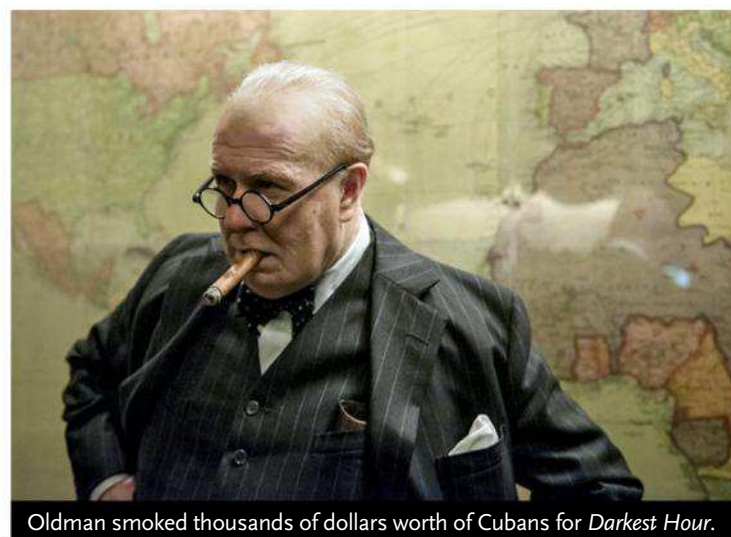
Hollywood seems to have decided that Churchill is best viewed under the microscope of individual historical moments of high stress, as a way of examining his character, his intellect and his soul. It can be the approach of World War II in *The Gathering Storm*, the life-or-death moment of Dunkirk in *Darkest Hour* or Churchill's second-guessing about the D-Day invasion in *Churchill. Into the Storm*, the 2009 HBO sequel to *The Gathering Storm*, starred Brendan Gleeson as Churchill and covered

everything from Dunkirk through Churchill's 1945 reelection loss, after saving the country and winning the war. Michael Gambon played the character in *Churchill's Secret* (2016), a film that illustrated the efforts to hide the fact that Churchill suffered a serious stroke in 1953, in the midst of his second term as prime minister.

Most of the films show some aspects of Churchill's remarkable life, but the best of them—including *Darkest Hour*—examine his courage under fire, in the face of stiff opposition from his own colleagues. *Darkest Hour* reveals a mind capable of running a government while managing a war that presented a threat to England's continued existence, even as he wrote and delivered some of the most stirring speeches ever made by a politician.

The lure for an actor is irresistible: to capture Churchill at a particularly charged moment, dealing with events that changed the course of history, even while revealing his deeply complex humanity.

"The character was so interesting, full of contradictions and different colors and different kinds of surprising passions," actor John Lithgow told *Indiewire*. "He's such a one-of-a-kind character, and I think everybody is equally intimidated by it because he's so iconic. He's arguably the best-known man of the 20th century. It's the kind of role any actor just adores."



Oldman smoked thousands of dollars worth of Cubans for *Darkest Hour*.

Having first resisted and then given himself over to Winston Churchill on a two-year-plus journey to the Oscar ("Winston came for me," he said), Oldman admits that he retains a lasting fascination with the character.

Oldman said he was constantly amazed discovering things about Churchill. He told the *Toronto Star*: "Churchill was the epitome, the torch of oratory and language and what language can do, how it can move people. His choice of words, very simple and direct Anglo-Saxon words, could rally a nation." ❖

Contributing editor Marshall Fine is critic-in-residence at The Picture House Regional Film Center in Pelham, NY.

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SMOKING AND DRINKING LIKE CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill had a legendary love of cigars and drinks. We asked two experts to examine his taste for the good life, and separate fact from fiction by David Savona

Imagine the great Sir Winston Churchill without a cigar clamped in his jaws or between his fingers is almost impossible. Stories that relate his prodigious drinking abound. His appetites for both, in quantities that would render even the hardiest among us incapacitated, seem superhuman. What is real and what is legend? Was he truly—as he is so often portrayed—never without a smoke, drinking morning, noon and night? To uncover the truth, we reached out to the experts: Lee Pollock, trustee and advisor to the Board of The International Churchill Society, and Rob Fox, a co-owner of James J. Fox in London and Ireland.

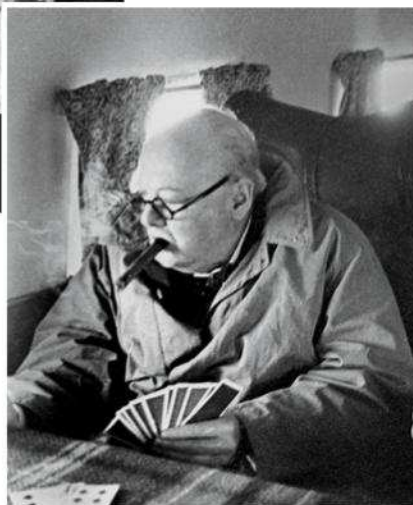


Sir Winston Churchill indulged early and often with libations and cigars. Above, clinking glasses with the Soviet ambassador, and at right, puffing on a plane.

LEGEND Churchill smoked a staggering amount of cigars.

REALITY By any reasonable standard.

“The number of cigars he smoked is truly extraordinary,” says Fox, whose company sold its first cigars in 1787. Churchill was a client of the store (then called Robert Lewis) at London’s 19 St. James Street. Fox has handwritten ledgers, telegrams and other records that document that the soldier/statesman bought hundreds of thousands of cigars there. During one six-month stretch in 1964—the year before he died—Churchill bought 825 cigars: 250 in April, 275 cigars in June and 100 per month in July,



August and September. “It was a pretty consistent pattern of what he was buying,” says Fox. And that wasn’t the only shop supplying him with cigars. “He was doing business with a lot of cigar stores,” says Fox, “but we were one of his largest suppliers.”

LEGEND He would smoke just about anywhere.

REALITY According to photographic evidence.

While visiting New York City in 1931, Churchill momentarily forgot that Americans drive on the right (or wrong, in his view) side of the road and was struck by a car. Upon his return home to England, Churchill was strapped to a gurney and put into an ambulance. A photo of the moment shows him smiling happily, puffing on his cigar. It wasn’t the only time Churchill was photographed on a stretcher smoking a cigar.

LEGEND He only smoked Churchills.

REALITY Close, but no cigar.

Cuba’s Churchill size—seven inches long by 47 ring gauge—was named for the great statesman, but he smoked cigars of varying size. “He bought all sorts of different brands and sizes,” says Fox, whose ledgers show repeated purchases of Romeo y Julieta Pirámides and Romeo Epicure Grandes, which are no longer part of the main Cuban Romeo line, as well as other smokes.

LEGEND He never shopped for bargains.

REALITY Depended on the occasion.

A telegram to the Robert Lewis shop, dated October 8, 1963, details Churchill’s order for a gift of cigars for his grandson. “A box of 25

When Did Churchills Become Churchills?



Vintage Romeo y Julieta Churchills, one of the most famous Cuban cigars.

You see them in every tasting section of every issue of CIGAR AFICIONADO—Churchills, big cigars that combine length and girth. The size is a standard one inside Cuban cigar factories, 7 inches long with a ring gauge of 47. For CIGAR AFICIONADO tasting parameters, it’s any cigar that measures 6 3/4

inches to 7 3/8 inches long, with a ring gauge of at least 47.

The size is named for Churchill, but the timing of its origin is disputed. Many say it was created in the Romeo y Julieta factory in the late 1940s, after a visit by Sir Winston himself, who was an avid smoker of cigars and of Romeos in particular. Others believe it wasn’t until the 1950s that the Churchill name first appeared on Romeo y Julieta cigars. Before there were Romeo y Julieta Churchills, there was the Romeo y Julieta Clemenceau, made to the same

dimensions. (In a Cuban cigar factory, the Churchill size is known as a Julieta No. 2.) Today, Clemenceaus are gone, while the Romeo Churchill remains. While the Cuban cigar industry has eliminated Punch and Hoyo de Monterrey Churchills, it has expanded Churchills within the Romeo line, adding Short, Wide and Petit Churchills—which really aren’t Churchills at all, for they are shorter cigars.

Regardless of the origin, today the name Churchill is synonymous with large cigars.

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cigars of good quality, but not quite as good as the Romeo & Juliet,” it reads. On a trip to the United States in the 1930s, according to Pollock, he bought Royal Darby Longfellows, paying \$147 for 1,000 (less than 15 cents apiece). “He had to economize here and there,” says Pollock. “His bills for cigars, wine and food were considerable.”

LEGEND He had vast stocks of smokes.

REALITY How big is your humidior?

“At Chartwell, his home in Kent, he had a cigar storage area with 3,000 or 4,000 cigars,” says Pollock.

LEGEND His day began with a glass of Scotch.

REALITY It did indeed.

Just as portrayed in the film *Darkest Hour*, Churchill greeted the morning with a cigar and a Scotch and soda while in bed. Pollock explains that he would wake around 8 a.m. and begin reading through a stack of newspapers, not leaving bed until about 10. He would sip his Scotch, adding water to it throughout the day.

LEGEND He was often inebriated.

REALITY He held his liquor.

“He drank a lot, but he didn’t drink near as much as popular legend would have it,” says Pollock. “The amount he drank was exaggerated.” It is true that Churchill drank Champagne with lunch, French reds and whites with other meals, Cognac later in the day and more Scotch at night. He also liked Martinis. (And he liked them exceptionally dry, unlike his ally, U.S. President Franklin



Churchill managed to bring his cigar virtually everywhere—even on a ride in an ambulance.

Delano Roosevelt, who made them “very long on vermouth,” says Pollock.) But all this drinking didn’t mean Churchill was stumbling around. “There’s almost no record of him being drunk in public,” says Pollock, giving credence to Churchill’s famous line: “I have taken more out of alcohol than it has taken out of me.”

LEGEND He was brand loyal.

REALITY True, for his drinks....

Churchill’s Scotch of choice was Johnnie Walker Red or Black (blends were far more prevalent than single malts in his day) and he adored Pol Roger Champagne. “He became quite friendly with the Pol Roger family,” says Pollock. Pol Roger created a special Champagne in his honor, Pol Roger Cuvée Winston Churchill.

...But not his cigars. “His favorite brand was Romeo y Julieta, but it wasn’t the only brand he smoked,” says Fox. Most cigar smokers in Churchill’s day stuck to one size from one brand. Not Sir Winston, who puffed a variety, much like the cigar smoker of today, only on a far grander scale. “He was buying all sorts of different brands and sizes,” says Fox. “He bought multiple boxes of multiple lines per order. One order could be three or four brands, and multiple boxes within those lines.”

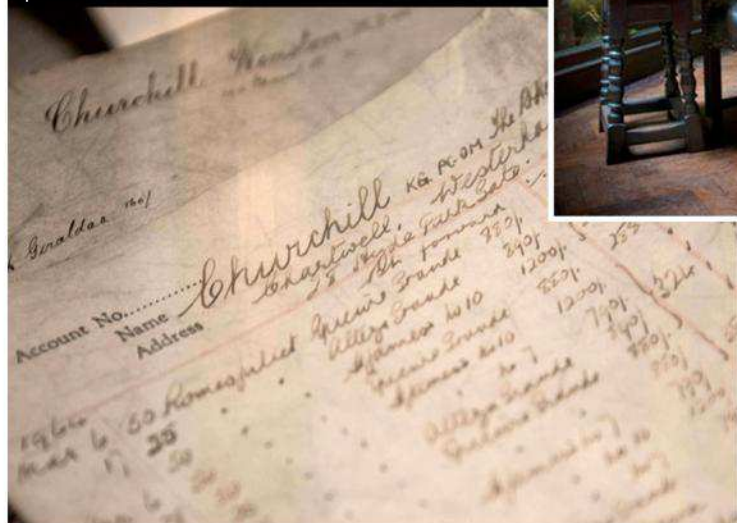
LEGEND He left few cigars behind.

REALITY He smoked most of them.

“There was never a big, huge auction of cigars at the end of Churchill’s life. It wasn’t as if he was buying to collect,” says Fox. “He was buying to consume.” A box of cigars once owned by Sir Winston—along with the Romeo y Julieta it contained—is on display at Fox’s shop in London, under glass, along with a cigar case once carried by the Prime Minister. ♦



London’s James J. Fox still has the ledgers (below) of Churchill’s considerable cigar purchases, as well as the chair in which he sat.



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A Gift From Cuba

Marvin R. Shanken's Churchill Humidor

If your name is Winston Churchill, you need a large humidor. This stately wooden cabinet was a gift from the Cuban government to Sir Winston in 1941, complete with 5,000 Cuban cigars. Opening the twin, thick wooden doors reveals the storage areas where some of those cigars once resided, as well as a metal plate, inscribed with words written in Spanish. When translated, they read: "To the Honorable Winston S. Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, from the democracy of Cuba." Today, this impressive piece of cigar history is part of the humidor collection of Marvin R. Shanken, the editor and publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine. "This plate really says it all," says Shanken. "That puts historic proportions on it you can't measure."

A HUMIDOR OF HISTORY This is no mere desktop model, but a massive cabinet measuring 22 inches tall, 3 feet, 3 1/2 inches wide and 17 1/2 inches deep. It came with 5,000 Cuban cigars, each measuring 7 inches by 47 ring, a size later named Churchill.



LORD OF THE SEA Churchill twice served as First Lord of the Admiralty, when Great Britain's Royal Navy was the most powerful seaborne force in the world. This carving of a battleship on the left door of the humidor symbolizes his lifelong ties to the ocean.

BOHEMIA MAGAZINE On the thick right door, alongside the image of Britain's Big Ben, we see a cigar-chomping Churchill on the cover of *Bohemia* magazine. The publication was a popular one in its day, and people in Havana's factories read it aloud to cigar rollers.

COAT OF ARMS The right side panel of the humidor bears a rendering of the Royal Coat of Arms of King George VI, the reigning monarch during Churchill's first term as Prime Minister. The panel on the opposite side shows Cuba's coat of arms, with its shield.

SEE THE VIDEO To watch a video of Marvin R. Shanken describing the Churchill humidor, go to video.cigaraficionado.com

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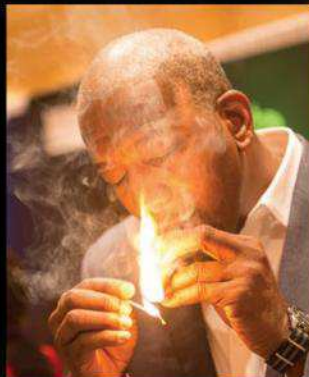
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At The TOP Of His GAME

Pete Bevacqua,
CEO of the PGA of America,
is helping to shape golf's future

BY JEFF WILLIAMS
PORTRAITS BY JEFFERY SALTER

In the summer of 1994, after his first year at Georgetown University Law Center, Pete Bevacqua had a decision to make: He could work as a clerk for a New York State Supreme Court justice, or he could return once again to the Bedford Golf and Tennis Club to caddie, as he had done since the age of 10.

His father Arthur was adamant on what he should do.

"My father talked me into going back to the golf course," says Bevacqua. "He said enjoy this summer and play as much golf as you can, and I did."

Bevacqua chose passion over practicality, love over the law. And while he would go on to get his law degree in 1997, it's now 2018 and Bevacqua is the CEO of the PGA of America, the head of an organization with 29,000 club professionals and two of the five top events in golf, the PGA Championship and the Ryder Cup.

His passion for golf has taken him all the way to the top of the game. He's a 2.8 handicap on the course, but a major champion on golf's world stage, a wheeler-dealer of significant influence that he wields with sanguine charm and singular effectiveness.

Since his tenure began in 2012, a number of major PGA initiatives have come to pass, or are slated for the near future: The PGA Championship will move to May from August in 2019, allowing a better progression of golf's majors and freeing up August for the PGA Tour playoffs. The 2019 PGA Championship





Pete Bevacqua in his natural element, on the Champion course at PGA National Resort and Spa, home to the Honda Classic.

and the 2024 Ryder Cup will be played at Bevacqua's beloved Black Course at New York's Bethpage State Park, and another public facility, TPC Harding Park in San Francisco, will host the 2020 PGA. In 2015 the PGA partnered with the LPGA, changing the LPGA Championship to the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. And in 2013 the PGA negotiated an unprecedented 15-year extension with NBC for the broadcast rights to the Ryder Cup and several other PGA sponsored tournaments.

Under Bevacqua, the corporate culture of the PGA has become more focused, more driven by a long-term strategic plan, more integrated, more centric on its membership while at the same time being largely liberated from a suit-and-tie mentality.

"I always talk about how I've never been the smartest guy in the room my whole life," says Mike Whan, commissioner of the LPGA and a friend and collaborator of Bevacqua's. "I'm pretty sure Pete's never been able to say that because he's usually the smartest guy in the room. An incredibly smart guy."

His intelligence, his drive, his passion and his distinctly social nature have made him a major stakeholder in the game, and at age 45 his influence will have a long and potentially significant impact for years to come.



Pete Bevacqua with top golfer Rory McIlroy, winner of four major championships.

This influence emanates from PGA headquarters in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. (The PGA has been here since 1965, but it may move to the Dallas area, according to reports. By late March no decision had been made.) Bevacqua's brightly adorned corner office has pictures and plaques, trophies and mementos. There's nothing flashy about it. The desk could have come from IKEA, but several of the game's top players are represented. His late father Arthur is a much-loved presence.

It was Arthur's love of the game of golf—love of life—really, that made Bevacqua's rocket-trajectory rise in the game possible. Arthur was a dentist in Bedford, a well-heeled suburb north of New York City. Beyond his family of wife Lenora, four girls and a single boy—

the baby of the lot—Arthur was an avid, though not accomplished golfer, a lover of the arts and a graduate of Notre Dame, a school that had become part of the DNA he would pass along to Pete.

"My whole childhood revolved around two things, golf and Notre Dame," says Bevacqua, sitting in his office dressed in natty golf attire, a freshly shaved bald head, and a naturally summoned smile. "That was my relationship with my father. Notre Dame, because he had gone to Notre Dame, and golf. I remember going to the 1984 U.S. Open at Winged Foot with my father standing on the 18th hole near Fuzzy Zoeller when he waved the white towel. Hundreds of times going to the Cherry Lawn driving range, no longer there, hitting balls off of artificial tufts of grass, and then going to Leno's Clam Bar for cheeseburgers."

There were also trips to Bethpage, to play the five courses there, including the magnificent and memorable Black. Along for the ride sometimes would be childhood friend Larry Marchini, now a New York banker. Sometimes they would play 36 holes. The trips became journeys into a vastly larger life. There were visits to Borgatti's in the Bronx for ravioli, sojourns to Marlon Brando film festivals, concerts by Johnny Cash and Mel Tormé and long treks to Maine for summer vacations. Bevacqua was an accomplished

athlete, the quarterback of his football team at the Brunswick School in Greenwich, Connecticut, and captain of the golf and basketball teams. He was an equally accomplished student, attacking his schoolwork with such vigor that he became valedictorian.

Marchini saw early on that Bevacqua was destined for success. "He's very intelligent, very driven and his work ethic is very strong," says Marchini, who has known him since the fifth grade. "He always did his homework, he was meticulously neat, he got straight As... He always does a lot of work to get ahead."

All during this time, he was being greatly influenced by someone whose organization he would come to lead. Walt Ronan was the golf professional at Bedford Golf and Tennis, a man with the ability to connect, guide and inspire his membership. This quality was not lost on Bevacqua, even as a teenage caddie, that a club professional was the person who connected the game to those who played it.

"We have 29,000 people who wake up every day living and breathing this game, connecting everyone in the country to the game," says Bevacqua.

"Whether you play at a private golf course in Palm Beach or a public golf course in Kansas, there is a PGA professional connecting you to the game."

Bevacqua's connection to the PGA, and to the hierarchy of golf, was not a certain thing at all when he graduated from Notre Dame in 1993, magna cum laude, with a BA in English and a minor in film. He had won an Indiana journalism society award for his film reviews for the Notre Dame newspaper, but he really didn't know what he wanted to do. "If you asked me at 21 what my dream job would have been, it would have been to be the film critic for *The New York Times*," says Bevacqua.

So he bought some time. He returned to the Brunswick School



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for a year as a teacher (English and algebra) and coach (football, basketball and golf). “I used that year to figure out what to do next... I loved being a student and I thought worst-case, law school buys me three more years of being a student.”

After getting his law degree in 1997 he went to work for Davis Polk, a prestigious Manhattan law firm. Bevacqua had always been a worker, but as an associate low on the totem pole the hours were long and tough. “It was certainly a bit of a grind,” he says. The job soon got to him. Before his father died in an auto accident in 1997, he had wondered if the law was the right direction for his son. “It was my father who always regretted that I was doing something that maybe my heart wasn’t really into,” says Bevacqua. “He’d say you are all about sports. It just seems that is where you ought to be.”

He had a revelation during a particularly rough stretch of work with a 78-hour week. “I run home, take a shower and come right back to work,” he says. “A light went off in me and I said, ‘Is this what I want to do with the rest of my life?’”

Georgetown Law kept a roster of its alumni and where they had landed, and Bevacqua came across the name of Romaney Berson, who in 2000 was the chief legal officer of the United States Golf Association. Bevacqua sent a letter and a résumé, waited months for a response, then was called to the organization’s office for an interview. He was selected as the USGA’s in-house counsel in 2000, his foot in the door of a golf career.

USGA executive director David Fay was so impressed with Bevacqua’s acumen and passion that he made him managing director of the U.S. Open in 2004, and by 2009 he was the USGA’s chief business officer. Both jobs required refined people skills to deal with large egos and testy situations. But that year, he hit a speed bump in his career. He was interviewed by the LPGA to be their next commissioner, but the job fell to Whan. (Bevacqua has said repeatedly that Whan was the right man for the job.) Fay abruptly left the USGA in 2010, and Mike Davis was named executive director in 2011. Another disappointment, but in the end another opportunity. Bevacqua left the USGA to become the head of global golf for the Creative Artists Agency, a powerful player in the entertainment world that was also teeing it up for some golf business.

“When David Fay left and Mike Davis became executive director, I didn’t feel like there was anything left there for me to do,” says Bevacqua, who began representing brands that spent on golf, as well as advising players. “I was looking for a different kind of challenge and CAA was looking for me to bolster and lead their golf initiatives.”

The PGA of America came knocking at his door when Joe Steranka left the CEO job in 2012. When he interviewed with Derek Sprague, then secretary of the PGA and later president, he made an impression. Sprague helped put Bevacqua in charge.

“He was very polished, very focused, very visionary,” says Sprague. “He did his research on the PGA of America. He understood the role of the PGA professional and he had the business

acumen from his time at the USGA running U.S. Opens. A great combination for the PGA of America to have the skill set.”

Yes, Bevacqua was prepared for that interview, just as he always seems to be. “When I interviewed for this role, my whole premise was that we needed to do a better job connecting the national organization to its membership,” says Bevacqua. “When I got here it was very much a hybrid organization with two almost distinct

staffs. There was a staff consumed by the business of the organization revolving around the PGA Championship and the Ryder Cup and our partnerships in the broadcast world. Then there was a staff really focused on the membership—with education, employment, player development. I thought I brought a strategic vision. I always felt I was good at saying this is what we need to do to get from here to there.”

Getting to there, in Bevacqua’s eyes, meant getting this large organization focused, and on the move. “I think the PGA of America was always viewed as sort of an aircraft carrier lumbering along,” says Bevacqua. “But I think through our board of directors and our senior team, we aren’t afraid to act a little bit faster

now. I think I’ve helped accomplish bringing the staff closer to the membership we serve, having that culture that is all about those PGA professionals. I think I’ve helped the organization be more open and accessible. I tell people here if we are batting 1,000 we aren’t doing a good job. It means we are being too safe. We can’t be afraid to get hit by the pitch. We’re going to make some mistakes. But if they are smart mistakes and we learn from them without trying to talk in business-speak cliché that means we are doing some good things.”

One very good thing was the creation of the KPMG Women’s PGA Championship. Diversity within the organization had always been a major theme for Bevacqua, to empower the women that were within it, and bring them more into the fold. When he was negotiating the NBC contract extension, he had in mind that the PGA might one day sponsor a women’s championship. He had a provision built into the contract that if the PGA did come up with such a competition, it would be televised on NBC.

The day before Halloween in 2013, Mike Whan, the LPGA commissioner, called Bevacqua to discuss a joint major with the PGA, and they agreed to meet the following day. Whan drove down from Daytona and Bevacqua drove up from Palm Beach Gardens and they met in Melbourne. Whan had the idea and the potential sponsor in KPMG. Bevacqua had the desire and the NBC commitment. They met for a couple of hours, but Bevacqua, the father of daughter Samantha and sons Arthur and Jake, needed to head home. “He looked at me at about three o’clock and said, ‘I don’t mean to be rude, but it’s Halloween and if I don’t get home soon I might be a single parent,’” Whan remembers. Bevacqua made it home for Halloween with Tiffany and the kids, and at the 2014 Masters the deal to put on the Women’s PGA came together. The first championship was played the following year.

The Women’s PGA is a significant feather in Bevacqua’s cap, but there is so much else to do to expand the diversity theme,

“People have less time
than they ever had.
The beauty of golf is
going out and playing
a beautiful course with
three friends. We have
to show people you can
have a 30, 60, 90-minute
golf experience.”

grow the game and benefit the members. “Diversity. Golf has a tough past,” says Bevacqua, his face narrowing with purposeful seriousness. “There is not enough diversity in the sport at any level. We need more women, we need more minorities in our staff, we need that in our PGA professional ranks, we need that in people watching the game and maybe most importantly in terms of people playing the game...Diversity in golf is not only the right thing to do from a moral perspective, but from a business perspective it’s a smart thing to do. The face of this game has to change if we are going to grow and increase in our relevancy.”



Bevacqua, photographed in his corner office at PGA headquarters, enjoys cigars on the course.

Bevacqua is also looking beyond the traditional game of 18 holes and four and a half hours. Society is changing, and the overall golf experience will have to change.

“Golf takes time and people have less time than they ever had. The beauty of golf is going out and playing a beautiful golf course with three friends. But people do things in 30, 60, 90-minute segments. We have to show people you can have a 30, 60, 90-minute golf experience,” he says. “It doesn’t have to always be 18 holes. Take a lesson from a PGA professional. Go to a Top Golf and drink a pitcher of soda, eat chicken wings and hit balls. Go play two or three holes after work with your kids or your spouse. We need to make the funnel into the game as big as possible. The more people who can have a golf experience, the more people our PGA professionals can turn into lifelong golfers.”

Those who play golf with Bevacqua say that particular experience is always memorable. He can hit the ball a mile, is competitive as all get out, but enjoys every second of the round. That would include smoking a cigar along the way, his favorites being Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series.

Paul Levy, the current president of the PGA, sings Bevacqua’s praises, and enjoys a cigar with him. “Pete has brought a passion

for the job, a passion for the game,” says Levy. “His biggest asset is he’s worldly and down to earth at the same time. He knows everyone in the industry, he understands the industry, he understands the business of the industry.” The two have engaged in several casual but meaningful chats about the state of the game and the state of the PGA while the cigar smoke rose. “He and I are the two cigar smokers in the office,” says Levy. “We have had many a cigar smoke where we have talked about where we are going and what we are doing. Pete’s just one of those guys you want to hang out with, talk about life, talk about sports.”

One of those guys who likes to hang out with Bevacqua is Arizona Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald, who happens to be a bit of a golf nut. He won the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am with Kevin Streelman this year. “I got a chance to meet Pete at a golf event in California last June,” says Fitzgerald. “He is engaging, humble, honest and extremely inquisitive. Cares deeply about the game of golf and the people that play it. I’m privileged to call him a friend. The game of golf and the PGA are in good hands.”

“He’s brought a different perspective to the job and the association,” says Kerry Haigh, who has been around the PGA since 1989. Bevacqua appointed him as chief championships officer not long after he took over. “He’s very forward thinking. He’s certainly able to focus on five, 10, 20 years down the road as opposed to next six months or year. He’s very dynamic, personable. He knows more people than anyone I know.” (Bevacqua estimates he has 5,000 contacts on his mobile phone, which must need its own server.)

Charlie Robson, the former longtime executive director of the Met Section of the PGA, calls Bevacqua “one of the most gifted dinner speakers I’ve ever heard because he speaks from the heart.” Bevacqua sometimes uses lines from *The Godfather* to make a point, but his most frequent gesture might be taken from the show “Kojak,” which starred Telly Savalas. The two bear a striking resemblance. Suzy Whaley, vice president of the PGA, notes this trait impishly. “When things are kind of going his way, he points both fingers at you like Telly Savalas and goes ‘Hey, now,’” she says. “If you put up a picture of Telly Savalas with a cigar in his mouth and one with Pete with a cigar in his mouth, you go ‘Look at that!’”

Look at what Pete Bevacqua has done. He is chairman of the International Golf Federation, instrumental in bringing golf back to the Olympics. He’s the former chair of the World Golf Foundation. He is on the board of RISE, a group that promotes racial equality. Through it all, he brings an infinite supply of passion.

“As I always say, if you aren’t real passionate about the game of golf, you should not be a PGA professional,” says Bevacqua. “It begins and ends with that passion.”

For him, the passion is not going to end. ♦

Jeff Williams is a CIGAR AFICIONADO contributing editor.



VILLIGER

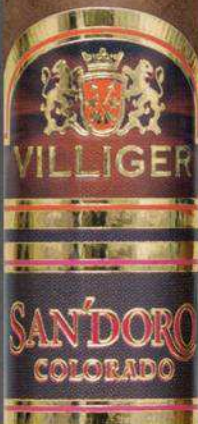
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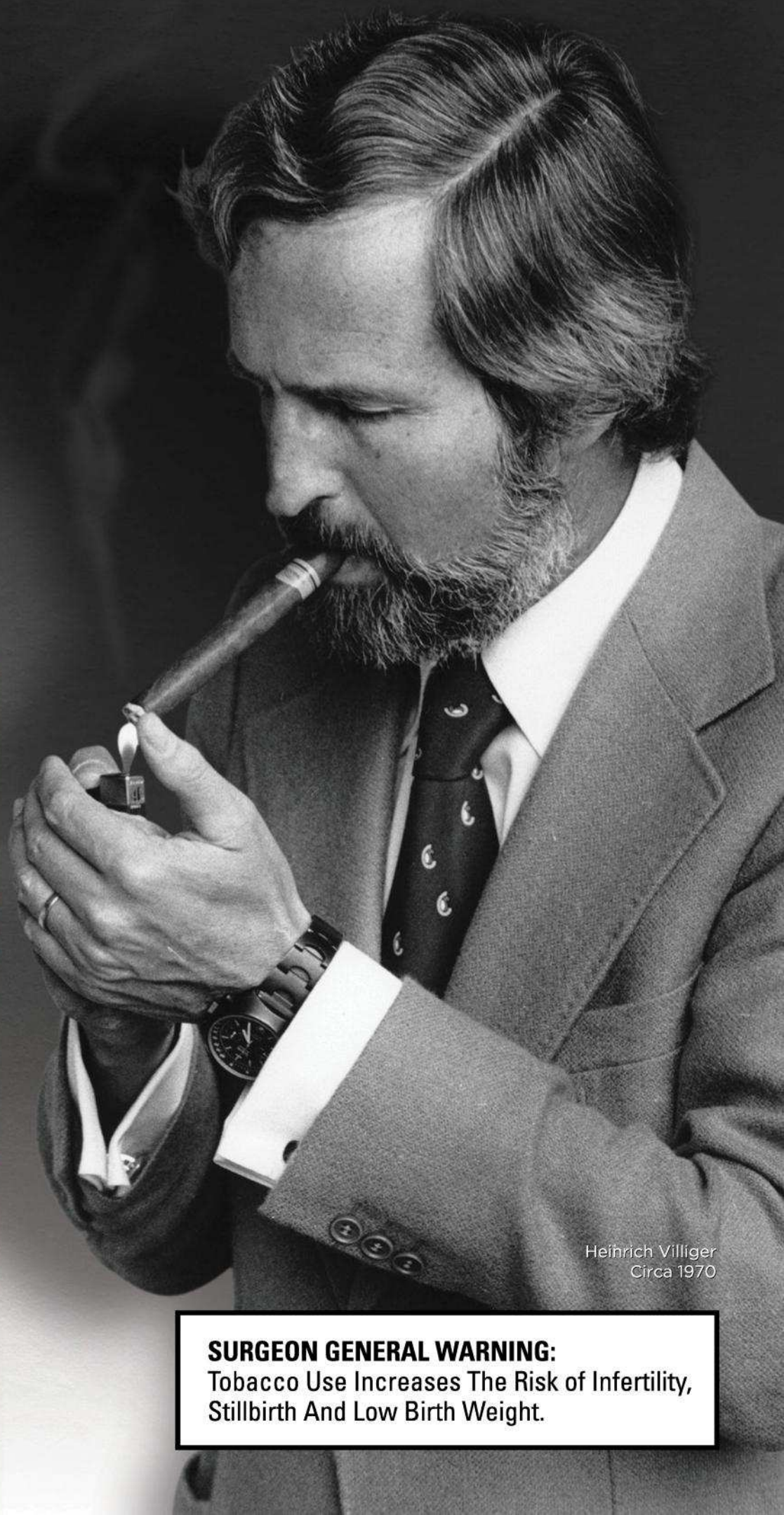
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by Jack Bettridge

Let's take a trip back to the good old days, a simpler time of little government regulation. It was an age when unsavory whiskey dealers ran unchecked and mixed unaged spirits with chemical adulterants, colorants and flavoring agents including wood shavings, creosote, acid, prune juice, burnt sugar, iodine and tobacco and had the gall to call them whiskeys. Some good came of that free-wheeling post-Civil War era of drinking, when Congress created a supreme standard of American whiskey purity that is having a rebirth today: Bottled-in-bond.

At the time, legitimate whiskey makers sought a distinction that would separate their products from horror-show swills, and largely through the efforts of the Bourbon distiller Col. E.H. Taylor Jr. the 1897 Bottled-in-Bond Act was enacted. What bonding guaranteed then and now is that a spirit carrying



that designation came from one distillery in one distilling season, was stored for at least four years and then bottled at exactly 100 proof. (When bonds were first defined, government agents held keys to each bonded warehouse, so they could account for each barrel that went in or out. That stipulation was relaxed in the 1980s.) Nothing could be added to the product, other than water.

“Back then, a bottled-in-bond stamp on a bottle of whiskey would give you confidence that this isn’t bathtub gin, this isn’t moonshine, that this is safe to drink,” says Kris Comstock, the Bourbon marketing director for Buffalo Trace, a distillery that honors Col. Taylor with a collection of eight bonded whiskeys that bear his name. The concept so revolutionized the whiskey world that for years bonded products occupied the top shelves of liquor stores and bars. Eventually, the quality of other liquors became good enough that bonded whiskey became a quaint anachronism that many brands downplayed. But today, burgeoning whiskey and cocktail cultures have rediscovered the importance of the bonded hallmark, and upwards of two dozen products are proudly displaying the seal. And they aren’t just Bourbons. Any 100-proof spirit that meets the other stipulations can be bonded, such as ryes and even brandies.

Chris Morris, the master distiller for Brown-Forman, which markets a bonded Old Forester as well as an Early Times, says a resurgence of interest in forgotten whiskeys has made bonds “cool again.” Fred Noe, master distiller of Jim Beam, which makes both bonded Bourbon and straight rye, says the new trend was sparked by historically minded mixologists who found that many classic cocktail recipes called for bonded whiskeys. The logic is valid. If a recipe is built around a 100-proof spirit, using something weaker waters down the intended result. Servicing the requests for bonded whiskeys, Noe says, was comparatively easy. The distillery kept the same recipes and production methods, but



didn’t reduce the proof as much with water at bottling. “You’re not reinventing the wheel,” he says.

Bernie Lubbers, of Heaven Hill, the leader in bonded spirits production with nine expressions, says that bonded products, having attained all the necessary merit badges, are the “Eagle Scouts” of liquor. And yet consumers remain largely unfamiliar with them. “It’s a hundred years later,” he says, “and we’re educating people about it again.”

It’s often said that the bottled-in-bond standard of purity doesn’t guarantee quality. But in practice it often delivers a superior drink, especially when comparing products that are otherwise identical except for their proof. Virtually all whiskey (save for high-octane barrel-proof versions) is diluted with water before being put into the bottle, and many are sold at less than 100 proof, with the minimum 80 proof being the most prevalent. The bonded product, which isn’t diluted as much, will generally win out. And for the consumer that is generally what sets bonds apart.

For the producer, however, proof isn’t the tallest hurdle to making a bonded spirit. “One of the more confining restrictions of bottled-in-bond is that every drop must come from that single distilling season,” says Morris. There are two distilling seasons a year, January through June and July through December. “If we take a barrel of whiskey from June we cannot batch it with a whiskey from July. Your inventory is constricted by these windows. Making a good bottled-in-bond is quite difficult.” That is also why bonded whiskey is usually the purview of distilleries with large inventories.

We drank our way through a wide selection of spirits from the bonded warehouses of America to see how they perform in the glass (see below). All are, of course, 100 proof. ♦

To find out how bonded spirits pair with handmade cigars, visit www.cigaraficionado.com.

Proof Positive

1792 bourbon (\$36) First called Ridgewood Reserve, 1792 comes from Bardstown’s Barton Distillery and is named for the year Kentucky was founded. A high rye content confers spicy flavors, including clove and spearmint, on its wood and fruit notes.

CHRISTIAN BROS. SACRED BOND brandy (\$18) Heaven Hill breaks the bonded brandy barrier by distilling wine in pot stills and then following the age and proof dictums usually followed by whiskeys that are bottled in bond. The two genres are reconciled with a marriage of vanilla and caramel with fruit, hard candy, grapes and licorice.

COL. E.H. TAYLOR SINGLE BARREL bourbon (\$40) The man honored in the whiskey’s name was not only integral in the passage of the Bottled-in-Bond Act, but he once owned the property where Buffalo Trace distills it. Its high corn content gives it a sweetness, which is offset by a pleasing rye bite. It balances caramel and toffee with clove and anise.

EARLY TIMES STRAIGHT BOURBON (\$25/liter) Don’t mistake this for Early Times Kentucky Whiskey. That spirit is made with a combination of new and used barrels. This bottled-in-bond version is matured in fresh casks. Warm, sweet smoke on the nose becomes fruity and spicy on the palate. Big and bold, it projects licorice and orange-peel notes as well as herbs and cinnamon.

EVAN WILLIAMS bourbon (\$18) You may already know this white-labeled bond for its bang-for-the-buck kid brother, which sports a black label and comes in at 86 proof. This bottling has all the vanilla and caramel notes of the black label, but adds a dose of spices like clove, cinnamon and ginger and a hearty herbal note to round things out.

HENRY MCKENNA bourbon (\$35) McKenna bests the rest of the bonded class in terms of age at 10 years. Furthermore, it’s the product of a single barrel, not just one distillery (we tasted cask No. 4344). Despite its age, this is a Bourbon with nuance that subtly introduces vanilla, caramel and toffee notes to licorice, spearmint and cinnamon flavors.

JIM BEAM BONDED *bourbon* (\$23)

Distiller Fred Noe says that creating a bonded Jim Beam wasn't a difficult order. Whether that's true or he's just being modest, the addition of 10 percent alcohol puts the whiskey in a different realm with deep flavors of hearty herbs, rich toffee, toast and leather, as well as sturdy floral notes.

MELLOW CORN *corn whiskey* (\$12)

Heaven Hill's Mellow Corn is a unicorn. Not only the rare corn whiskey (a mash bill of at least 80 percent corn), it is one of the few to be matured, unlike Bourbon. Still its sweetness is pronounced, with notes of vanilla, marshmallow, coconut, fruit and even brandy flavors.

OLD BARDSTOWN *bourbon* (\$22) The Willett Distillery in Bardstown, Kentucky, was silenced for years while it bottled rye and Bourbon sourced from other facilities. In 2012, it started distilling again with a new, patented pot still. Its bonded Bourbon has a maple syrup and molasses nose with caramel, spicy pepper and anise on the palate.

OLD FORESTER 1897 *bourbon* (\$50)

Years before 1897 Old Forester was already the first Bourbon to bottle and seal its product. This bonded product is an intense, full-bodied Bourbon with plenty of red fruit, rich toffee, caramel and maple, as well as slighter notes of licorice and orange peel.

OLD GRAND-DAD BONDED *bourbon*

(\$25) The grandfather this whiskey is named for is Basil Hayden, who founded the distillery where Old Grand-Dad was first made. Today, Jim Beam produces it alongside its Basil Hayden whiskey and they share a high-rye formula. Grand-Dad shows pepper, cinnamon and licorice layered with caramel, maple and vanilla.

OLD OVERHOLT *straight rye* (\$25) This rye is Old Overholt's first bonded whiskey in more than 50 years. Made by Jim Beam, it offers the fruit and spice of the standard release—cherries, blackberries, marzipan and cinnamon—along with Christmas spices as well as a mellow, hearty note of caramel.

RITTENHOUSE *straight rye* (\$25)

Rittenhouse is a post-Prohibition brand from Philadelphia. It was originally sold in 1934 as a two-year-old whisky. Now as a four-year-old, made by Heaven Hill, it is sublimely complex with notes of toffee, vanilla, mint, pepper, rye bread and cloves.



Old-Fashioned Way

The Old Fashioned got its name the old-fashioned way: it inherited it. Essentially, the recipe follows the first-known definition of a cocktail, printed in an 1806 newspaper: the drink is described as spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters. In the back half of that century, bar rooms were so gussied up with fanciful and flaming drinks that any purist wanting a simple cocktail would ask for something made the old-fashioned way. The name stuck, although the drink has become a little more complex with the addition of fruit to give it more flavor. Originally made with rye, it's now typically ordered with Bourbon, but any spirit will do. Our point is that you should make an old-fashioned cocktail with an old-fashioned liquor: one that was bottled in bond.

THE OLD FASHIONED

- 1 teaspoon simple syrup or 1 sugar cube
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 maraschino cherry
- 1 orange slice
- 2 ounces your choice of bottled-in-bond spirit (we prefer Bourbon)
- Seltzer water (optional)

Place the syrup, bitters, cherry and orange in an Old-Fashioned glass, and muddle to a paste. Add large ice cubes and the bonded spirit. Stir well. Variations include substituting fruits, but to try the drink the really old-fashioned way leave them out completely.

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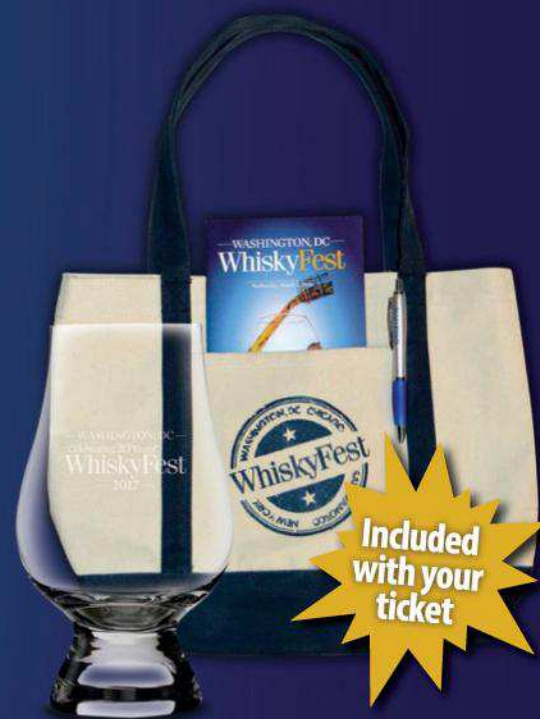
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Dove Tale Rum	Knappogue Castle		
Eagle Rare	Knob Creek		
Elijah Craig			



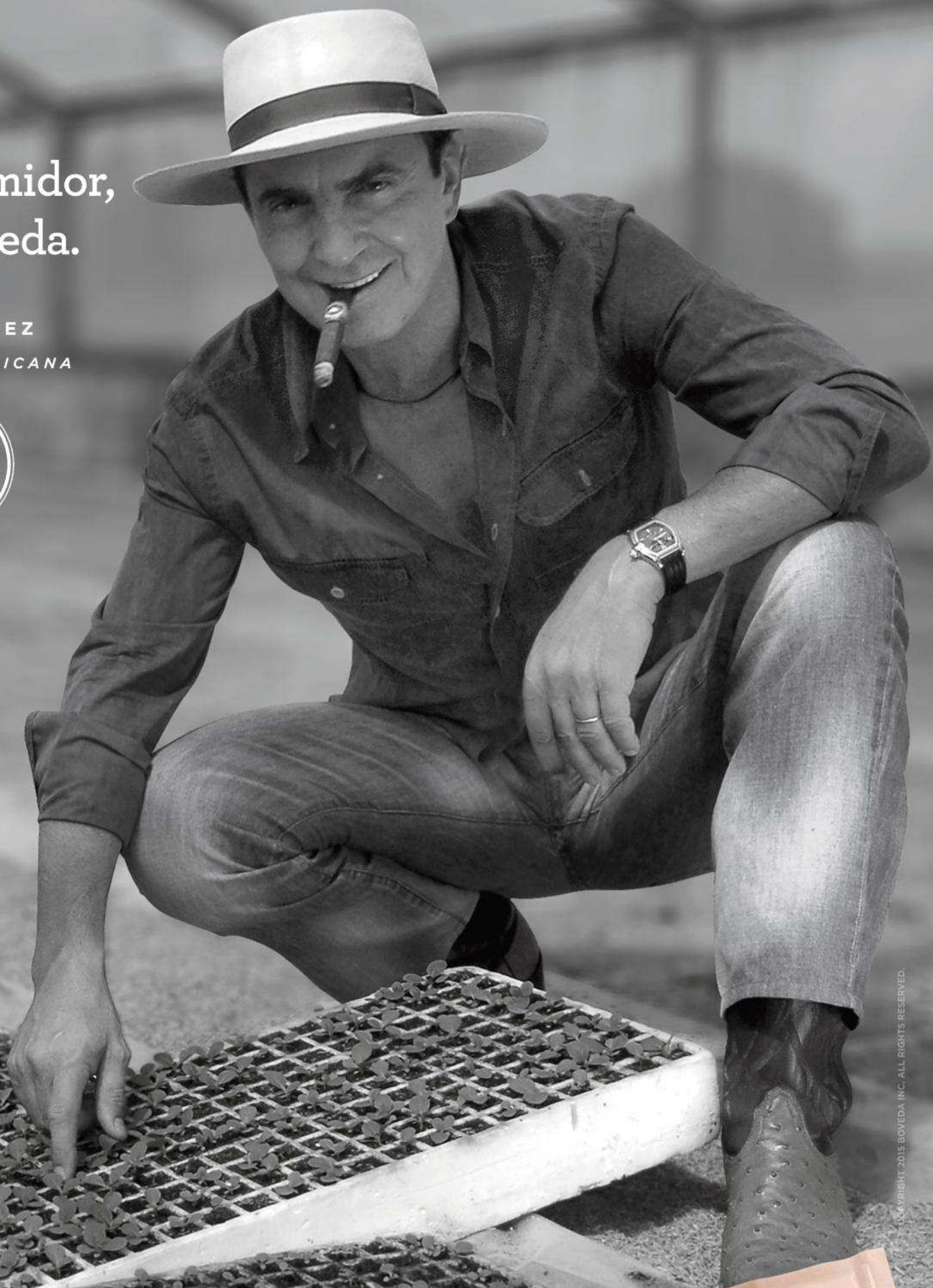
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cigars

100 CIGAR REVIEW

In an exceptional tasting, we reviewed an interesting array of 80 premium cigars, and 35 scored 90 points or higher—outstanding on our 100-point scale.

114 THE NEW CIGAR BUYING GUIDE

Prefer your cigars mild? Strong? Are you looking for a smart buy? Our new cigar-buying guide points you in the right direction for your next cigar shopping trip.

116 VINTAGE TASTING

The Churchill-sized H. Upmann Sir Winston from Cuba is named for the statesman himself, and a sample from 1995 proved to be extraordinary. Partagás Lusitanias from the early 1970s were still made the old-fashioned way—with a tapered 109 head. See how the iconic size performed after all these years.

118 FUENTE'S FANTASTIC FACTORY

Carlos "Carlito" Fuente Jr. has put an enormous amount of time, creative energy and money into his new factory, a grand, palatial courtyard that's set new standards in the cigar industry.

127 BIG SMOKE MIAMI

CIGAR AFICIONADO's Big Smoke Miami brings the action to the Fontainebleau Hotel where cigar lovers celebrate the good life with a stunning ocean view, creative cocktails, fine smokes and an ample supply of great company.

churchills

Churchill cigars are in many ways quite like the man for whom they are named—large, remarkable and impossible to ignore. They have fallen out of favor in some circles, and they are increasingly difficult to find, but we enjoy them immensely. A good Churchill delivers a long smoking experience, perfect for those days when you want to relax and reflect. This tasting is filled with good choices—six of the Churchills reviewed here scored 90 points or more. At the top are two standout Nicaraguan smokes, each of which scored 92 points. The Enclave Broadleaf Churchill is made by A.J. Fernandez, and the Padrón Serie 1926 No. 1 comes from one of the cigar world's most acclaimed names.



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

ENCLAVE BROADLEAF CHURCHILL
Elegant impressions of licorice and chocolate-covered almonds are balanced by a strong backbone of earth and spice. The cigar draws and burns evenly.
U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 NO. 1
A large, box-pressed cigar whose notes of rich, sweet chocolate are underscored by woodiness, and a spicy, toasty finish.
U.S.: \$22.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

**ALEC BRADLEY AMERICAN
SUN GROWN BLEND CHURCHILL**
Though the draw is notably firm, the cigar still produces a rich foundation of leathery, earthy notes complemented by sweet hints of toffee and a nutty, cashew-like finish.
U.S.: \$6.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: BRAZIL
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO

LIGA PRIVADA T52 CORONA DOBLE
Every puff of this dark cigar is full of oaky, cedary woodiness fortified by notes of raisins, red wine and a molasses finish. An interesting smoke.
U.S.: \$16.81 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



CUBA
RING GAUGE: 47 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JULY 2016

ROMEO Y JULIETA CHURCHILL (TUBO)
Beautiful to behold, this tawny-colored Churchill shows the sweet qualities of caramel and graham cracker as well as the saltiness of a chocolate-covered pretzel. The draw, however, is tight.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £30.50 STRENGTH: Medium

90



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

VILLIGER LA VENCEDORA CHURCHILL
Wrapped in a dark, clean cover leaf, this Churchill exhibits a palate of dried fruit from raisins and figs to apples and cherries. There's a bold underpinning of leather and cedar throughout.
U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

90

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

**HAMMER + SICKLE TRADEMARK SERIES
CONNECTICUT CHURCHILL**

A tan Churchill with visible white veins and an even, substantial draw. Notes of saffron, cinnamon and vanilla frame an earthy core. A citrus note emerges as well.
U.S.: \$9.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild

89

**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ILLUSIONE EPERNAY LA VIE

The edges of this box-pressed Churchill give it the appearance of a chocolate bar. Early notes of black tea and cedar intensify to warm graham cracker and cinnamon.
U.S.: \$12.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: MEXICO, NICARAGUA
BINDER: INDONESIA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

**MACANUDO INSPIRADO WHITE
CHURCHILL**

The lush draw of this Churchill offers lots of woody smoke with hints of citrus and cocoa powder. There is a faint suggestion of licorice on the finish.
U.S.: \$7.29 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

89

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

**UNDERCROWN SUN GROWN
CORONA DOBLE**

This large, solidly rolled Churchill draws very well, imparting a salty, nutty smoke with hints of oak and dried cranberry that lead to a sweet finish smacking of honey.
U.S.: \$9.98 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 58 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

**A. FLORES 1975 SERIE PRIVADA
CAPA HABANO SP 58**

A blocky, box-pressed Churchill that pops with the sweet-and-spicy notes of a gingersnap. The smoke becomes woody with a mineral finish.
U.S.: \$12.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: MEXICO

KRISTOFF SAN ANDRÉS CHURCHILL

Made with an inky-black wrapper, knotted pigtail and uncut foot, this earthy-tasting cigar imparts some secondary notes of dark chocolate, cedar and licorice.
U.S.: \$9.40 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

**ROMEO BY ROMEO Y JULIETA
CHURCHILL**

The firm draw of this huge cigar requires some effort to puff. It's a predominantly woody cigar with plenty of oaky, cedary notes, traces of dried fruit and a spicy finish.
U.S.: \$9.89 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88

**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS,
DOM. REP.
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

**HOYO DE MONTERREY EXCALIBUR NO. 11
MADURO**

Dark and splotchy in appearance with a roughly applied cap. The cigar delivers touches of walnut and cinnamon as it is smoked, and finishes sweet.
U.S.: \$8.29 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87

corona gordas

Corona gordas, which are also known as toros, seem to become more popular by the day. They combine a decent amount of length with considerable girth to provide a complex smoking experience. They also tend to be quite good, and nine of them scored 90 points or higher—more than any other category. The three best scored 93 points. The Cohiba Siglo VI (Tubo) is a blockbuster smoke that always seems to score well in our reviews. The H. Upmann Connaisseur B—which retails for about half the price of the Cohiba—is new, and just starting to appear in markets now. The My Father La Opulencia Toro is another hit from the Garcia family, two-time winners of Cigar of the Year.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 7/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2017

COHIBA SIGLO VI (TUBO)

The chocolatey, nutty smoke of this cigar is balanced by botanical notes of licorice and mint, all building to a rich finish that calls to mind a malted chocolate milkshake.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £46.10 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

93



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: NOVEMBER 2017

H. UPMANN CONNOSSIEUR B

A rich procession of coffee bean, café au lait and peanut notes harmonize beautifully with a dried fig sweetness and a toasty finish.

U.S.: N/A ITALY: 14.00 EURO STRENGTH: Medium-Full

93



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

MY FATHER LA OPULENCIA TORO

Each puff of this dark, box-pressed cigar leaves refined impressions of oak, chocolate and sweet licorice on the palate. The long finish resounds of anise and nougat.

U.S.: \$11.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

93



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2015

HOYO DE MONTERREY EPICURE NO. 1 (TUBO)

Initial puffs of this tawny-colored cigar are nutty and floral with clear notes of baking spices. The smoke becomes salty before showing its caramel sweetness.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £24.40 STRENGTH: Medium

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO

FOUR KICKS MADURO CORONA GORDA

Enrobed in a dark and oily wrapper, this slim cigar delivers notes of almond, coffee and wood interwoven with pleasant touches of cocoa and herbs. A bold cigar.

U.S.: \$8.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP., U.S.A./PENN.
BROADLEAF, NICARAGUA
BINDER: CAMEROON
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

LA AURORA ADN DOMINICANO TORO

The spicy, woody notes of this cigar meld pleasantly with hints of sweetness that segue into a graham cracker finish. The cigar draws and burns evenly throughout.

U.S.: \$8.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA,
HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

LA PALINA CLASSIC ROSADO ROBUSTO

Pronounced notes of cedar and minerals become earthier with dark cacao and coffee bean qualities. The wrapper is an alluring shade of reddish-brown.

U.S.: \$6.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

LARANJA RESERVA CORONA GORDA

Made with a flat head and three-seam cap. Initial nuttiness becomes sweeter, like marzipan, before developing a tangy coconut note and a woody finish.

U.S.: \$9.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: NOVEMBER 2017

PARTAGÁS SERIE NO. 1 EDICIÓN LIMITADA 2017

Made with a flat head and three-seam cap, this dark, oily cigar delivers a bold smoke full of leathery, woody notes, a chocolate sweetness and a slightly salty finish.

U.S.: N/A ITALY: 15.50 EURO STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

E.P. CARRILLO ELENCOS ELITES

This rustic-looking cigar smokes evenly, delivering elements of earth, coffee and touches of spice. The finish is pleasantly woody.

U.S.: \$9.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MY FATHER THE JUDGE TORO FINO

This softly pressed cigar has a lush draw and even burn. There's a smoky, peaty quality to each puff, as well as a woodiness, salty notes and hints of nuts and spice.

U.S.: \$11.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: MEXICO

ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 2006 SAN ANDREAS TORO

Core notes of coffee bean, dark chocolate and wood set the tone for this well-made cigar. Light nuttiness and mineral-like qualities also appear before a short finish.

U.S.: \$10.10 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, U.S.A./FLORIDA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

FLORIDA SUN GROWN TORO

Packed with tobacco, this dark toro produces a strong, solid ash. Dry, herbal notes of oolong tea are accompanied by nuttiness, earth and a hint of sassafras.

U.S.: \$12.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: U.S.A./PENN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

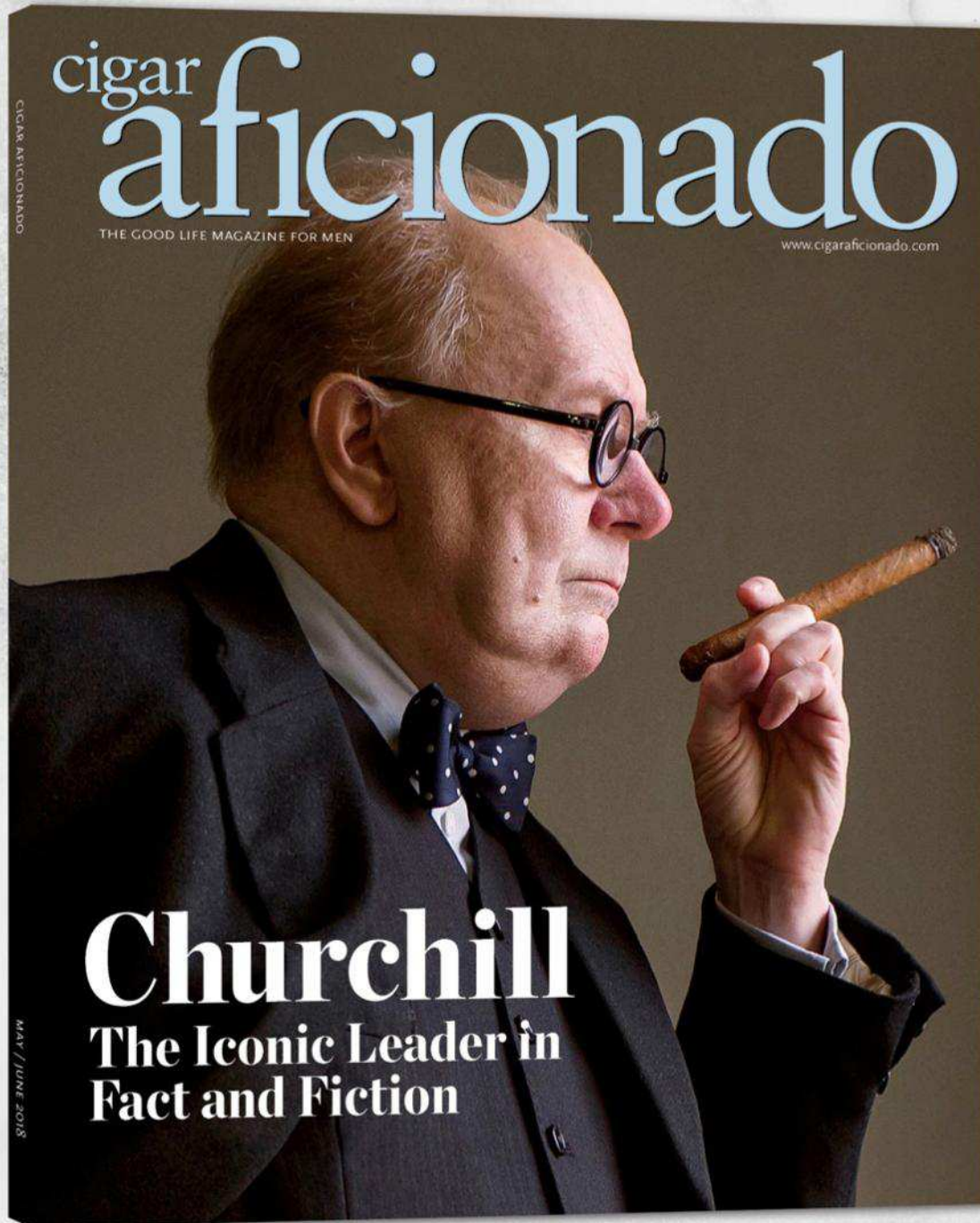
HAMLET 25TH YEAR TORO

While the draw and burn of this cigar are even and substantial, sweet nougat and vanilla notes clash with sharp woodiness and the herbal aftertaste.

U.S.: \$9.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87

THE ICONIC MEN'S MAGAZINE



A Subscription to *Cigar Aficionado* is
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Making any cigar by hand is a task beyond the capabilities of most cigar smokers, but crafting a cigar with curves or adding a pointed head makes that job even more difficult. When you're put on figurado duty in a cigar factory, it means you're in the major leagues. Seven of the 14 we tasted here scored 90 points or higher, and they are cigars that combine good looks with superb flavor. None scored higher than the Partagás Serie P No. 2 (Tubo), a complex Cuban smoke that earned 93 points. Arturo Fuente Hemingways were early non-Cuban examples of figurado excellence, and the Work of Art scored 92. The new Trinidad Santiago Belicoso from Altadis also scored 92 points.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MAY 2017

PARTAGÁS SERIE P NO. 2 (TUBO)

The color of this torpedo is alluring, though the texture is a bit rough. First puffs have the salty breadiness of a warm pretzel, but the cigar takes on sweet notes of dried fruit, chocolate and caramel.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £28.10 STRENGTH: Medium

93



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 4 7/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

ARTURO FUENTE HEMINGWAY WORK OF ART

Nutty and cedary to the core, this toasty figurado beautifully integrates a red licorice sweetness with each puff. The draw and burn are even and exemplary.

U.S.: \$9.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

TRINIDAD SANTIAGO BELICOSO

The superb draw of this attractive belicoso shows an earthy interplay of coffee and licorice before developing a honeyed wood sweetness. Balanced and elegant.

U.S.: \$9.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

92



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

JOYA DE NICARAGUA ANTAÑO GRAN RESERVA BELICOSO

Clove and cinnamon notes are buttressed by elements of earth, wood and spice. The draw of this well-made belicoso is smooth, and the burn quite even.

U.S.: \$10.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP., BRAZIL,
NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA AURORA RESERVA ESPECIAL 2008 BELICOSO

A well-made figurado with a lush draw and even burn. Walnut and earth notes are elevated by hints of raisin and a bright cedar finish.

U.S.: \$27.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ORTEGA SERIE D BLACK BELICOSO

Smoky hints of burning mesquite and cedar complement this cigar's rich, sweet notes of gingerbread and Christmas cake. The finish resonates of nutmeg and earth.

U.S.: \$7.85 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

91



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

PADILLA MIAMI 8&11 TORPEDO

The spicy, leather notes of this long torpedo take on hints of pistachios and barbecue sauce before a slightly charry finish.
U.S.: \$14.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

**ARTURO FUENTE
CHATEAU FUENTE PYRAMID**

Covered in a blond wrapper, this torpedo delivers a mellow, creamy smoke with touches of nuts and cedar.
U.S.: \$8.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

**BRICK HOUSE DOUBLE CONNECTICUT
SHORT TORPEDO**

This blond figurado has an open draw and a dead-even burn. Light notes of cardamom and cinnamon are balanced by hints of white pepper and sweet herbs.
U.S.: \$6.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

OLIVA SERIE G FIGURADO

It takes a while to burn past the nipple foot of this box-pressed Salomon, but when it does, the cigar opens up to show notes of malted chocolate and vanilla bean. The finish is a bit thin.
U.S.: \$6.87 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 66 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

NUB CAMEROON 466BPT

A blocky, box-pressed belicoso with salty, oaky notes that become sweet and nutty, but a hint of bitterness affected the score.
U.S.: \$8.45 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

**EL GALAN SEMILLA CUBANA HABANO
TORPEDO**

A chocolate-brown torpedo that offers a mostly woody, cedary smoke with touches of earth and a musty, papery finish.
U.S.: \$5.76 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

86



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.,
NICARAGUA, PERU
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: MEXICO

**MONTECRISTO PLATINUM
HABANA NO. 2**

Oaky and earthy, this dark torpedo has some floral undertones, but touches of mustiness and a short finish affected the score.
U.S.: \$12.89 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

86



COSTA RICA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: ECUADOR, PERU, DOM. REP.
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MBOMBAY COROJO OSCURO PERFECTO

Tapered at both ends, this blackish figurado showed some draw inconsistencies. Its up-front spiciness becomes sweeter with notes of ripe apple and chocolate, but an underlying bitterness hurt the score.
U.S.: \$9.49 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

85

Sanctuary



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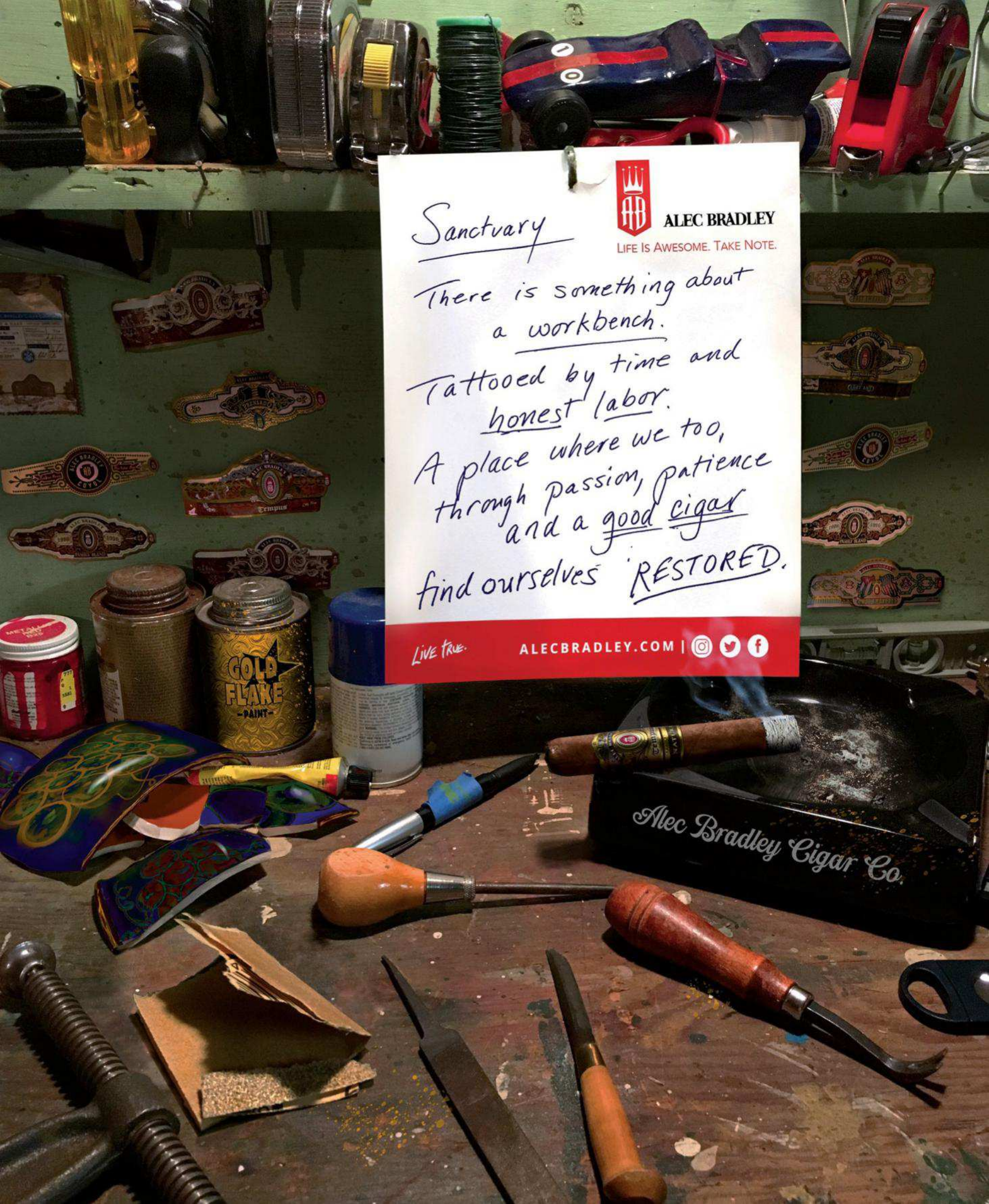
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grandes

The grande category is CIGAR AFICIONADO's newest, created in 2012. Cigars in this section are universally fat, typically measuring a stout 60 ring and 6 inches long. Cigar smokers just can't seem to get enough of them, even though their scores consistently lag behind the more traditional sizes. Only one grande in this most recent taste test scored 90 points, and that was the Nat Sherman Metropolitan Selection Habano Gordo. Made in Nicaragua from a blend consisting solely of Nicaraguan tobaccos, it's an easygoing and flavorful smoke. Close behind with scores of 89 were the Davidoff Escurio 6X60 from the Dominican Republic and the Nestor Miranda Collection Habano Gran Toro. Both cigars include some Brazilian tobacco in their blends.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

NAT SHERMAN METROPOLITAN SELECTION HABANO GORDO

Thick and massive with an even draw and burn. The smoke is mild and woody with hints of toasted almond and a creamy finish.

U.S.: \$7.75 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: BRAZIL, DOM. REP.
BINDER: BRAZIL
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DAVIDOFF ESCURIO 6X60

The smoke of this dark, fat cigar is earthy and leathery with a bit of cocoa sweetness and a dry finish. The draw and burn are superbly even.

U.S.: \$19.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA, BRAZIL
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

NESTOR MIRANDA COLLECTION HABANO GRAN TORO

Although the draw of this fat cigar is a bit firm, there's a cohesive combination of cedar, leather and nutty chocolate with every puff, but flavors dissipate a bit before the wheaty finish.

U.S.: \$9.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89



U.S.A.

RING GAUGE: 62 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

DON PEPIN GARCIA ORIGINAL TORO GRANDE BOX PRESSED

Intense notes of crushed black pepper dominate the first puffs of this huge, box-pressed cigar. Spicy cedar follows before bittersweet hints of cocoa struggle to get through. Strong, but lacks complexity.

U.S.: \$9.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

88



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

PERDOMO HABANO BOURBON BARREL-AGED CONNECTICUT GORDO

There's a slight, greenish tinge to this claro wrapper, and the cigar smokes quite evenly. Heavier notes of earth, wood and fresh tobacco give way to a light, slightly dry finish.

U.S.: \$9.25 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

88



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, ITALY, DOM.
REP., U.S.A.
BINDER: BRAZIL
WRAPPER: U.S.A.

C.A.O. AMERICA LANDMARK

A dark, fat cigar with candy-cane pinstriping and a scaly cap. The draw is weak, imparting a thin, woody smoke with a floral, perfume-like finish.

U.S.: \$8.49 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

GURKHA ROYAL CHALLENGE MADURO XO

Near black in appearance, this thick log of a cigar shows an oaky coffee bean character that takes on a barrel-char note and a licorice finish.

U.S.: \$9.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

87



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 64 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

INCH MADURO BY E.P. CARRILLO NO. 64

A hefty log of a cigar that requires double-puffing each time to get any substantial smoke. It's a woody-tasting cigar with a short, cedary finish.

U.S.: \$11.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 64 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

CASA MAGNA COLORADO GIGANTOR

The draw of this fat cigar is inconsistent, at times too airy or too firm. Damp, earthy notes are met with some sweetness and hints of coffee that lead to a mineral-like finish.

U.S.: \$9.80 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

86



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

SAN CRISTOBAL PAPAGAYO XXL

A dark corona gorda with a firm draw that delivers an earthy, peppery smoke with hints of leather and licorice, but the finish is oily and muddled.

U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

86



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ASYLUM 13 60X6

A big, dark log of a cigar gleaming with oil and heavy with tobacco. The draw is thin and the burn uneven. It starts strong and spicy with some cocoa powder and apple, but becomes herbal and vegetal.

U.S.: \$7.46 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

85



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

NEYA F8 YANKEE

This fat cigar has a bready, woody start but becomes stemmy and herbal with damp mushroom notes and a rough, charry finish.

U.S.: \$7.70 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

85

petit coronas

We're not big fans of cigarillos or other miniature cigars here at CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine, but we do smile when offered a petit corona. While they are quite short, they do have enough girth to still provide the flavor we desire, and some of them truly wow us with their performance. A perfect example is the Partagás Corona Junior, a tubed smoke from Havana that scored 94 points, the highest score of the issue. The smoke is stunningly complex despite being a mere 4 5/8 inches long, delivering a mix of strong and sweet flavors that combine in a remarkably satisfying smoke. Two other diminutive Cubans also scored well, the Punch Petit Coronation (93 points) and the Ramon Allones Small Club Corona (90). The Project 805 Petite Corona from Ventura Cigar Co. scored 91 points, and this Dominican puro has an interesting back story. The smoke, which is made by La Aurora, is powered by a bit of andullo tobacco, an unusual tobacco leaf that's rolled into very dense logs, wrapped up in palm bark like a sausage and typically chewed or smoked in a pipe. It works well in this blend.



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 5/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: APRIL 2014

PARTAGÁS CORONA JUNIOR (TUBO)

The smoke of this reddish petit corona is dense and chewy with complex layers of leather, dried fruit and nougat that unfold before a refined finish of nutmeg and spice.

U.S.: N/A ITALY: 6.20 EURO STRENGTH: Medium

94



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 5/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2015

PUNCH PETIT CORONATION (TUBO)

Rich chocolate notes immediately come through, transitioning elegantly into a palate of leather, baking spices and a distinct floral note of hibiscus.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £11.70 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

93



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

PROJECT 805 PETITE CORONA

Strong and leathery with some cedar and chocolate notes, but the bold flavors come together in a straightforward, rustic sort of way similar to that of a farm-rolled cigar. A tasty smoke.

U.S.: \$4.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

91



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4 3/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: APRIL 2017

RAMON ALLONES SMALL CLUB CORONA

Topped with a flat head and three-seam cap, this little cigar has a notably firm draw. Earthy and leathery in character, the bold smoke also offers a bit of nutmeg and black pepper.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £11.80 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 1/4"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: COSTA RICA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR, BRAZIL

7-20-4 HUSTLER SERIES DOG WALKER

Rollled with a barber-pole wrapper and pigtail cap. The draw is full and the burn, even. There's a quick blast of spice before a sweet nougat note and an earthy, muddy finish.

U.S.: \$6.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: BRAZIL

LA FLOR DOMINICANA PETITE LA NOX

Rumpled in appearance, this dark little cigar tastes as rustic as it looks, showing earth and salty notes along with wheat and licorice. The finish is a bit charry.
U.S.: \$7.40 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

89**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: INDONESIA
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

COHIBA CORONA MINOR

A woody little cigar with hints of earth, black pepper and a touch of malted chocolate sweetness that lead to a finish of tea leaves and more earth.
U.S.: \$11.99 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4 3/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

ASHTON CABINET SELECTION TRÉS PETITE

A light blond petit corona with a flat head. Its full draw produced a lot of thick, creamy smoke for such a small cigar. Though woody and nutty, the cigar leaves a vegetal aftertaste.
U.S.: \$9.10 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 41 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DAVIDOFF GRAND CRU NO. 5

Covered in a light, claro shade of wrapper, this blondish petit corona draws and burns evenly. Its sharp, woody smoke takes on a vanilla sweetness before the flinty, slightly acidic finish.
U.S.: \$11.60 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

86**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 3/5"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MAY 2017

H. UPMANN CORONA MINOR (TUBO)

A toothy petit corona whose notes of salted caramel, chocolate and coffee become a bit harsh, leaving a chalky sensation on the finish.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £13.60 STRENGTH: Medium

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 7/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA FLOR DOMINICANA LIGERO OSCURO NATURAL CABINET L-200

Charred notes of burnt toast are obvious on first puffs of this dark petit corona, which leaves the strong, overcooked impression of charcoal on the palate.
U.S.: \$6.90 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

QUESADA TRIBUTO ALVARITO

There's a bit of a raw, earthy taste to this petit corona that warms to show its sweeter side with vanilla and fresh tobacco. The finish calls to mind dark toast.
U.S.: \$6.36 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 38 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

ARTURO FUENTE PETIT CORONA MADURO

Near black and rough in appearance, this little smoke is slightly herbal with licorice and char notes. The finish hints of oil.
U.S.: \$5.55 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

85

robustos

This was a particularly strong tasting of robustos, and eight of these fat, short cigars scored 90 points or higher. The top performer was a brand called JFR made by Casa Fernandez at the TABSA cigar factory in Nicaragua. JFR stands for “Just For Retailers,” and the cigar brand was designed to be sold solely at brick-and-mortar cigar shops, not on the Internet or in a catalog. Maestro del Tiempo, a cigar brand from Kyle Gellis, the maker of Warped, scored 91 points. Gellis, one of the men behind Guardians of the Farm, CIGAR AFICIONADO’s No. 8 Cigar of the Year, is a young name in the cigar business who is doing one standout thing after another. ■ Several names that should be familiar to all cigar lovers scored in the 90s, including Aging Room Solera from Rafael Nodal, the Tatuaje Havana VI Verocú from Pete Johnson and the Partagás Serie D No. 4, the best-selling Cuban cigar made today. There are several newer cigars here as well, including Hit and Run, a joint project from Robert Caldwell and Matt Booth, HVC Cerro, named for the city of Havana, and the first CIGAR AFICIONADO rating for The Oscar Habano from Honduras.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

JFR LUNATIC SHORT ROBUSTO

A profoundly nutty smoke that layers the palate with heavy notes of cashew and walnut atop a bold, dense base of roasted coffee beans. The cigar is made with an uncut foot.

U.S.: \$5.98 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

93



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

MAESTRO DEL TIEMPO 5712

A beautiful robusto wrapped in a tawny cover leaf and finished with a three-seam cap. Its meaty walnut character is elevated by complex notes of cloves, cinnamon and black pepper.

U.S.: \$9.84 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4 5/7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: MEXICO

AGING ROOM SOLERA MADURO FESTIVO

A robusto with a snipped pigtail cap. Its gritty start evens out to show clear leather notes, some coffee bean and sweet cocoa.

U.S.: \$7.65 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 4 3/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: INDONESIA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

HIT & RUN ALMOST ROBUSTO

An attractive cigar whose consistent draw shows elements of cashew and walnut skin, coupled with touches of black and white pepper and a floral finish.

U.S.: \$11.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

HVC CERRO ROBUSTO

The floral and cedary notes of this well-made robusto are enriched by hints of chocolate, sweet nuts and spice. Its draw and burn are open and even.

U.S.: \$8.30 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium

90

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 7/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JUNE 2016

PARTAGÁS SERIE D NO. 4 (TUBO)

Strong spiciness on first puffs settles down to show salty notes of leather, some oak and an earthy, finish that carries a touch of cocoa bean.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £19.35 STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

TATUAJE HAVANA VI VEROCÚ NO. 9

A dark robusto whose even draw delivers a smoke redolent of dark chocolate and cherries with hints of wood and a toasty finish.

U.S.: \$8.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

90**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

THE OSCAR HABANO ROBUSTO

Dark and gleaming with oils, this attractive robusto offers notes of oak, cocoa and coffee bean as it burns. There are hints of licorice and minerals on the finish.

U.S.: \$10.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

90**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 7/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2014

HOYO DE MONTERREY EPICURE NO. 2 (TUBO)

Visible pores on the wrapper of this tawny-colored robusto give it a toothy appearance. It's mostly a woody, hickory-like smoke with hints of chocolate and nuts.

U.S.: N/A U.K.: £16.95 STRENGTH: Medium

89**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, BRAZIL
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

NEW WORLD CONNECTICUT ROBUSTO

This blond robusto begins mild and fruity but intensifies a bit to show a richer palate of cedar, leather and lemon peel. It draws and burns evenly.

U.S.: \$7.20 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

89**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

PADRÓN DÁMASO NO. 12

A golden-brown robusto with a perfect draw and burn that forms a solid ash. Notes of earth and chocolate are accented by nuts and fruit before a light, straw-and-hay finish.

U.S.: \$13.50 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Mild-Medium

89**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

CAMACHO DIPLOMA SPECIAL SELECTION ROBUSTO

Crafted with a dark, reddish-brown wrapper and three-seam cap, this cigar smokes evenly, delivering heavy notes of spice and pepper with a zesty, cedary finish.

U.S.: \$20.00 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Full

88**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: MEXICO

LA GALERA MADURO CHAVETA

The unusually packed head of this robusto results in a tight draw. Notes of earth, licorice and slate lead to a predominantly earthy finish.

U.S.: \$5.95 U.K.: N/A STRENGTH: Medium-Full

87

buying guide

TOP SCORES, VALUES AND STRENGTH | BLIND TASTE TEST NO. 144

TOP SCORES

-  **94** **Partagás Corona Junior (Tubo)**
Cuba • 6.20 EURO Italy • Petit Corona • Medium
-  **93** **Cohiba Siglo VI (Tubo)**
Cuba • £46.10 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
-  **93** **H. Upmann Connossieur B**
Cuba • 14.00 EURO Italy • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
-  **93** **JFR Lunatic Short Robusto**
Nicaragua • \$5.98 • Robusto • Medium-Full
-  **93** **My Father La Opulencia Toro**
Nicaragua • \$11.80 • Corona Gorda • Medium-Full
-  **93** **Partagás Serie P No. 2 (Tubo)**
Cuba • £28.10 • Figurado • Medium
-  **93** **Punch Petit Coronation (Tubo)**
Cuba • £11.70 • Petit Corona • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Arturo Fuente Hemingway Work of Art**
Dom. Rep. • \$9.65 • Figurado • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Enclave Broadleaf Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$9.50 • Churchill • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Padrón Serie 1926 No. 1**
Nicaragua • \$22.00 • Churchill • Medium-Full
-  **92** **Trinidad Santiago Belicoso**
Dom. Rep. • \$9.90 • Figurado • Medium

TOP VALUES

-  **94** **Partagás Corona Junior (Tubo)**
Cuba • 6.20 EURO Italy • Petit Corona • Medium
-  **91** **Project 805 Petite Corona**
Dom. Rep. • \$4.99 • Petit Corona • Full
-  **89** **7-20-4 Hustler Series Dog Walker**
Honduras • \$6.00 • Petit Corona • Medium
-  **89** **Brick House Double Connecticut Short Torpedo**
Nicaragua • \$6.20 • Figurado • Mild-Medium

MILDER CIGARS

- 89** **Arturo Fuente Chateau Fuente Pyramid**
Dom. Rep. • \$8.25 • Figurado • Mild-Medium
- 89** **Hammer + Sickle Trademark Series Connecticut Churchill**
Dom. Rep. • \$9.25 • Churchill • Mild
- 89** **Macanudo Inspirado White Churchill**
Dom. Rep. • \$7.29 • Churchill • Mild-Medium
- 89** **New World Connecticut Robusto**
Nicaragua • \$7.20 • Robusto • Mild-Medium
- 89** **Padrón Dámaso No. 12**
Nicaragua • \$13.50 • Robusto • Mild-Medium

MEDIUM-BODIED CIGARS

- 91** **Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No. 1 (Tubo)**
Cuba • £24.40 • Corona Gorda • Medium
- 91** **La Aurora Reserva Especial 2008 Belicoso**
Dom. Rep. • \$27.00 • Figurado • Medium
- 91** **Maestro del Tiempo 5712**
Nicaragua • \$9.84 • Robusto • Medium
- 90** **Laranja Reserva Corona Gorda**
Nicaragua • \$9.90 • Corona Gorda • Medium
- 90** **Nat Sherman Metropolitan Selection Habano Gordo**
Nicaragua • \$7.75 • Grande • Medium

STRONGER SMOKES

- 91** **Alec Bradley American Sun Grown Blend Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$6.50 • Churchill • Medium-Full
- 91** **Joya de Nicaragua Antaño Gran Reserva Belicoso**
Nicaragua • \$10.75 • Figurado • Medium-Full
- 91** **Ortega Serie D Black Belicoso**
Nicaragua • \$7.85 • Figurado • Medium-Full
- 90** **Aging Room Solera Maduro Festivo**
Dom. Rep. • \$7.65 • Robusto • Medium-Full
- 90** **Villiger La Vencedora Churchill**
Nicaragua • \$10.00 • Churchill • Full

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Classic 95–100 • Outstanding 90–94 • Very good to excellent 80–89 • Average to good commercial quality 70–79
Don't waste your money 0–69 • Not available N/A • Note: all prices are manufacturers' suggested retail, before taxes.

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A TASTING OF VINTAGE CIGARS



98 H. UPMANN SIR WINSTON (1995)

This Churchill-sized cigar is named for Sir Winston Churchill himself. At seven inches long by 47 ring, it's the same size as a Romeo y Julieta Churchill, but far harder to find. Its packaging is distinctive, with a dark green box. The smoke itself, medium-brown in color and 23 years old, has a perfect draw, delivering smooth and spicy flavors hinting of sweet cinnamon and nutmeg. There are earthy tones as well, with a pleasant hint of vanilla. —*Marvin R. Shanken*



97 PARTAGÁS LUSITANIA (1972)

This Lusitania is made in its original style—a Conde 109 shape, which is a double corona with a pointed head. It is a virtually perfect smoke. The good draw and burn deliver smoke with a delicate combination of white pepper and cinnamon on the palate, with a hint of cedar on the long finish. A cigar with 46 years in the box—and a lot of life left in it. —*Gordon Mott*



96 HOYO DE MONTERREY LE HOYO DES DIEUX (1994)

Le Hoyo cigars have intrigued me since I first saw one in a shop in Havana back in 1996. The des Dieux is just over six inches long, with a slim 42 ring gauge, and this well-aged example is exceptionally woody from the first puff. The draw and burn are near perfect, and the wood is soon joined by notes of walnut and English breakfast tea. It's a medium-bodied smoke with a pleasantly sweet almond paste finish. —*David Savona*



95 L'ATELIER LAT56 (2012)

The cellophane wrapper from this well-rolled cigar has developed a nice shade of yellow. Big chocolate notes on the start segue into a cadre of baking spices: cinnamon, clove and cardamom. The wood note from the original tasting is more nuanced now, showing hints of roasted vanilla and a distinct coffee bean note. Salted leather comes in on the end. Still strong overall, but much more refined. —*Andrew Nagy*

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The main lobby of Fuente's new factory is welcoming and ornate, laid with decorative tiles flown in from Spain and Italy. It's one of two reception rooms that lead to the main courtyard and is filled with art and memorabilia.

Carlos Fuente Jr. and the *Cigar Factory*

The Willy Wonka of the
cigar world has turned his
Dominican cigar factory
into a work of art

BY GREGORY MOTTOLA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID YELLEN

There's nothing like it in the world—The cigar world anyway. It may sound like hubris or like some second-rate promotional cliché, but in this case, it happens to be true. And now, cigar lovers have a new item to put on their bucket list: a tour of the new Fuente Factory.

It's a rainy winter afternoon in the Dominican Republic and Carlos "Carlito" Fuente Jr. hurries into the office of his factory, holding, of all things, his dry cleaning. There's a photo shoot on the schedule, as well as an interview, but Carlito has other plans.

"I don't want any pictures of this place," he says, sounding a little annoyed. His office is crowded with cigar memorabilia and there's a coffee waiting for him on his desk. "It's not finished," he insists. "No photos until the place is finished."

Almost on cue, a crack of thunder outside punctuates the finality of his words. Fuente's jet-black hair, groomed mustache

and Panama hat give him the classic, silver-screen look of someone like Errol Flynn or Clark Gable, only Fuente seems preoccupied at the moment. It's been unseasonably rainy in the Dominican Republic with violent downpours every day. He takes a sip of coffee

without sitting down.

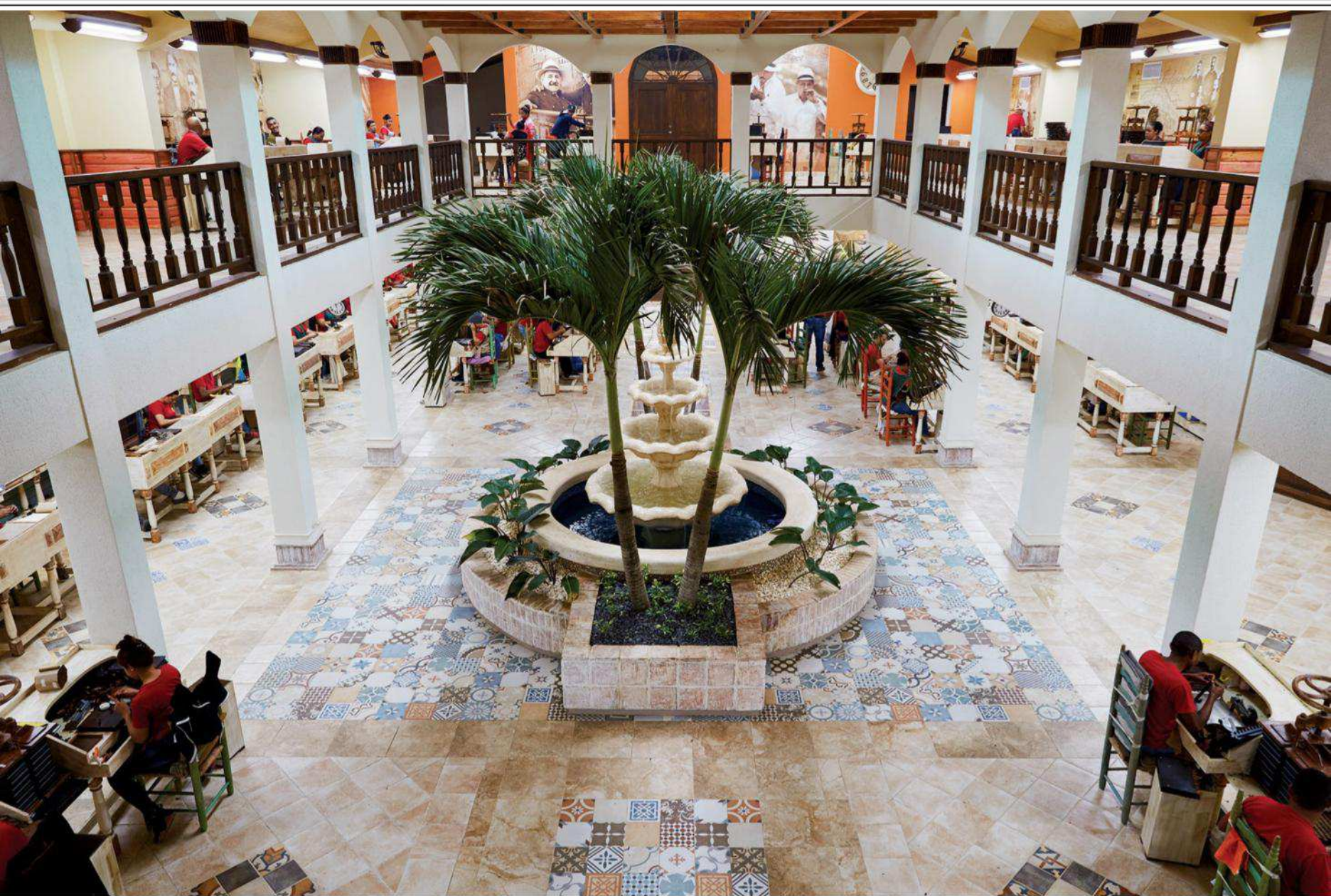
Outside, the rain comes down harder, and somehow, right within the confines of his own office, Fuente disappears. Just like that. Trap door? Secret exit? No matter. It seems his mind is made up. There will be no pictures.

Then, Fuente rematerializes outside of his office and walks back in the way he came, this time a little less anxious. Wherever he vanished to, he's now reconsidered. He has a Fuente Fuente OpusX in his hand, which he lights. The smoke wafts around his face, briefly trapped by the brim of his hat.

"OK," he says. "But we're doing this from the beginning."



Carlos "Carlito" Fuente Jr. lights up in front of the fountain in his grand courtyard factory. Referred to as "the cathedral of tobacco," the beautiful two-story space is a fully functioning cigar-rolling gallery.



A view from the upper level of the grand courtyard. The fountain brings a tranquil air as rollers make cigars on both floors of the “cathedral of tobacco.”

It starts with a cigar factory, and for most of the cigar world factories are simple places of business, strictly utilitarian, typically consisting of nothing more than rows of rolling tables set up in a warehouse or nondescript industrial space. Under normal circumstances, the best you can hope for in such places is a clean environment and good lighting. Fuente’s factory, Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia., has been simply that for much of its long life. Fuente Jr. and his father, Carlos Fuente Sr., came here in 1980 seeking a new home after their factories in Nicaragua and Honduras burned to the ground. They set up shop quite modestly in the first free zone in Santiago, known as Zona Franca No. 1, an industrial park that allows manufacturing (cigars and otherwise) for export only, at a low tax rate.

Over the years, the Fuente footprint has grown, and today the Fuente complex in Santiago consists of four separate facilities within the free zone, where 30 million cigars are produced each year, entirely by hand. Some of them are contract brands such as Ashton and Diamond Crown. About 700,000 (a mere 2.3 percent)

are Fuente Fuente OpusX. Efficient and productive, the factory has served Fuente well over the past 38 years, but starting in 2015, Fuente Jr. began remaking it, from top to bottom.

Fuente has envisioned this grand and beautified operation for quite some time. Now, the dream has taken shape in the form of a palatial courtyard and massive expansion that’s tripled the size of Fuente’s Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia. main facility.

“There isn’t a square inch of this place that doesn’t symbolize something,” Fuente says. He’s not exaggerating. While there’s an obvious grandeur to every new room, there’s also a story. Decorative tiles and ornate masonry are laid like literary allusions to the larger narrative—Fuente’s cigar empire. Some of the details are subtle, some are more heavy-handed. Either way Fuente doesn’t want you to merely see each new space. He wants you to experience them. To feel them the way he feels them. Much like his cigars, the new factory is as much an emotion for Fuente as it is an edifice.

Take, for example, the lush and airy central courtyard. It’s the crowning jewel of this massive expansion, and for Fuente, it’s a

tribute to his roots in Tampa, Florida, the cigar-making city where Fuente is headquartered. Based on the classic Columbia restaurant in Tampa, the two-level courtyard is referred to as the *catedral de tabaco*—cathedral of tobacco.

The cathedral was built with its own lavish lobby. Where most cigar factory entrances are quite unceremonious, this one serves as a prologue for the story that's about to unfold. After that, you walk through double doors to another antechamber for reception. The tension builds, and then the crescendo peaks as you walk into the courtyard and behold its dramatic beauty.

A central fountain and some palm trees are, naturally, the first details that blossom into view. (No surprise. The name Fuente means fountain in Spanish.) From there, the rest of the two-story gallery takes shape. Cigar rollers on the ground floor are situated along the courtyard's perimeter. On the arched upper level, more rollers overlook the fountain while a skylight adds to the airy affect.

For all its architectural drama and productivity, the courtyard is tranquil. The fountain cascades softly and the cigar rollers seem as relaxed as they are focused. Fuente Jr. walks across the tiled floor to a roller and points out a mural on the wall behind him

with an old photo of company founder Arturo Fuente. "You see that? That's my grandfather," Fuente says. He stares at the photo for a moment and then moves on. "There's still so much to do," he adds and hurries up the stairway.

On the other side of the courtyard, situated on the second floor is the new barrel room. At this point, it is not yet in full operation. Rum barrels line a far wall and there's space downstairs for more. The barrels are for tobacco, and this is the room where Fuente plans to barrel-age tobacco for every cigar he makes.

"Right now, only Añejo, Don Carlos and OpusX tobacco get barrel-aged, but why shouldn't every cigar? A Fuente 8-5-8 is just as good as an OpusX and I'm going to prove it."

He doesn't plan on merely having a room full of barrels. That would be boring. And that just wouldn't be Fuente. In addition to all the tobacco barrels, he plans on creating a barrel carousel of sorts in the middle of the room. More like an interactive Ferris wheel, but instead of passenger pods, it will contain barrels, each with a different tobacco. This way, a user can spin the wheel and examine the different tobaccos by smell, by sight, by touch. At the time this article went to press, the wheel was only in blueprint form, but there's no reason to think that this

Fuente's Nicaraguan Plan

BY DAVID CLOUGH

Beside a field of lush green tobacco plants on a farm called El Buen Vecino in Estelí, Nicaragua, a large tobacco curing barn sits roasting in the sun. It's a hot, humid day in late January, but inside the barn the air is cool and faintly sweet. Fresh tobacco leaves hang high above the earthen floor and people are gathered below, drinking rum and smoking cigars. They are here for Puro Sabor, the Nicaraguan cigar and tobacco festival. At the mouth of the building stands a man in silhouette, framed against the blinding midday sun. He is smoking an OpusX. Heads turn to look as the man steps inside.

"I'm back in Nicaragua. Carlito's back," says Carlos "Carlito" Fuente Jr. He's the man behind Arturo Fuente Cigars, and his surprise announcement stuns the cigar smokers nestled inside the barn. His visit is a surprise, his arrival a closely guarded secret. The cigarmaker, known for his Dominican-made Fuente Fuente OpusX and Arturo Fuente cigars, has come here to announce his company's expansion into Nicaragua with a new cigar factory.

"Being back in Estelí brings back so many memories as a young boy," Fuente Jr. says. His family-owned company owned a cigar factory in Nicaragua until the country was ravaged by political upheaval and the factory destroyed in 1978. At the time, Arturo Fuente Cigars was run by Carlos Fuente Sr., who then moved operations to the Dominican Republic to start anew with his son.

Standing in the tobacco barn before a large display board obscured by black cloth, Fuente Jr. revealed his plans for the new cigar factory. It would be based here in Estelí, he said, and it would honor the memory of his father, who died in 2016.

The black cloth fell away, revealing the conceptual artwork of a large, multistory colonial

building complete with balconies, palm trees and a grand dome at the top. It looks like a building from the nearby city of Granada. "The factory is just a few blocks from the center of the city," Fuente says. "It's a big property that we bought years ago—and we were just quiet about it." Fuente has named the factory Gran Fabrica de Tabacos La Bella y La Bestia, and La Bella y La Bestia translates to Beauty and the Beast.

The vision, Fuente says, was "to pay respect to Nicaragua. Like making a colonial building—not a Cuban building, not a Dominican building—something that respected Nicaragua with the Nicaraguan flag that you see, that was the most important element. To make sure that flag is flying high. We're in Nicaragua. And if you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk."

Felix Mesa, owner of El Galan Cigars, has been named head of Fuente's operations in Nicaragua. Gran Fabrica de Tabacos La Bella y La Bestia is in the preliminary stages of development. A completion date for the factory has not yet been announced.

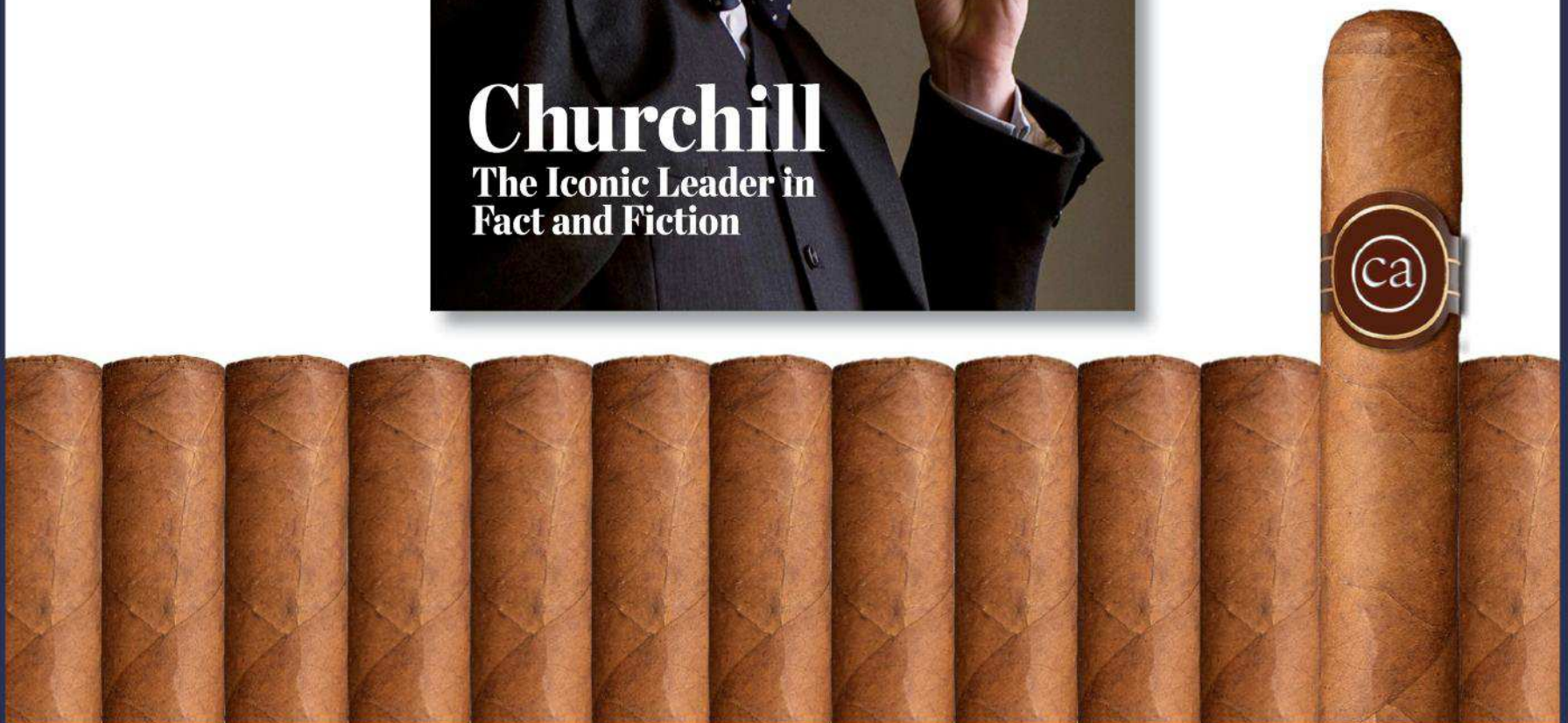
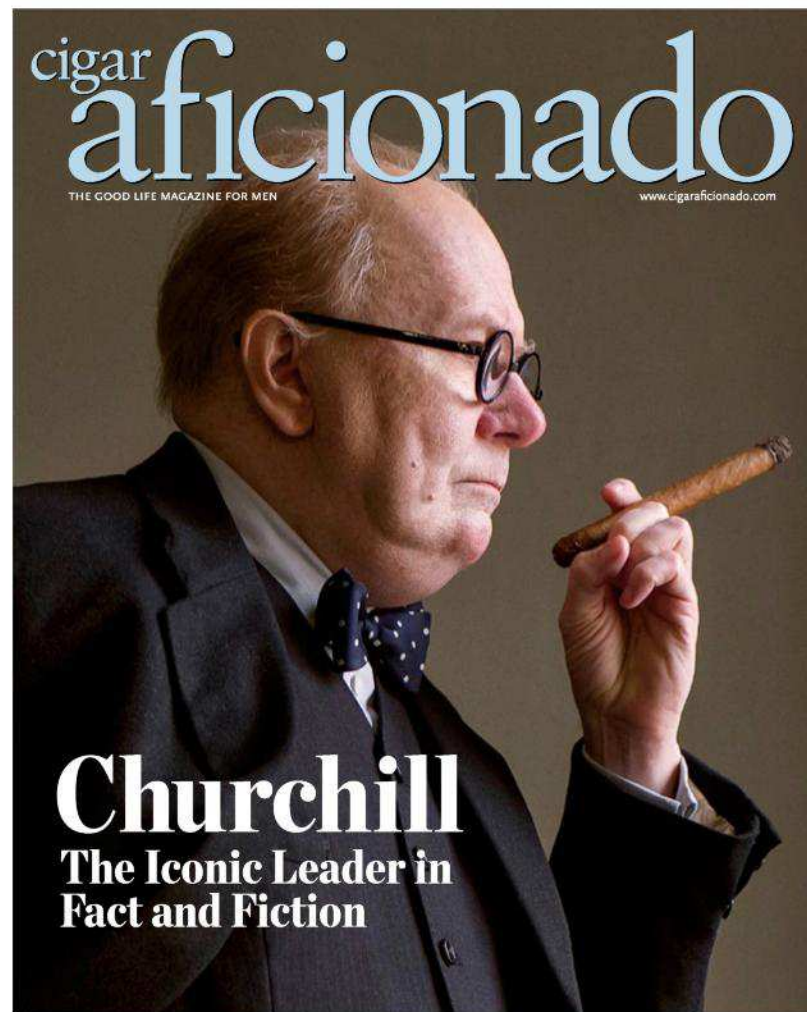


An artistic rendering of the cigar factory that Fuente plans to build in Nicaragua. It will be called Gran Fabrica de Tabacos La Bella y La Bestia—which translates to beauty and the beast.

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won't become a reality. When Fuente has an idea, no matter how unusual, he seems to follow through.

"I'm really a kid at heart," he says with a smile, his dark cigar clenched in his right hand. "I never grew up. That's one of my secrets."

Comparisons to Walt Disney would be understandable. Fuente has created a beautiful, fantastic environment, and, like Disney, he aims to bring some wonderment to the cigar world. But that isn't the right comparison. Disney implies a sense of make-believe, while what Fuente does is quite real. Willy Wonka might be a more apt comparison. Like the mythic chocolate factory, few people get the pleasure of actually going inside. Rather than chocolate, Fuente churns out unique smokes that have one of the largest, most passionate fan bases in the cigar world. And like Wonka, Fuente is always experimenting—and also a bit reclusive.

Lately, Fuente sightings have been rare, and he's still very guarded as to who he does and does not allow into the factory. During the ProCigar Festival, when all the participating members open up their factories in the Dominican Republic, Fuente, instead, diverts the tour to his tobacco farm, Chateau de la Fuente, miles and miles away from where his cigars are rolled. Of course, Chateau de la Fuente has a magic all of its own, and is no less breathtaking or important. Yet even some of his biggest fans have never set foot into Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia., let alone even seen it.

Getting to the factory isn't exactly a mystery. Once you get past the gate, the free zone looks as drab as any other industrial park. Then, as you get closer, you see some landscaping. Then the property becomes more florid and lush—a true oasis among the grim landscape of warehouses. Making the outside beautiful was always part of the grand plan.

In order to expand, Fuente took over the existing buildings (former textile facilities) all around the main factory. There was one behind him, one to the left and one to the right. They're all under his control now, and have been seamlessly joined together, albeit in a labyrinthine kind of way. Perhaps this was by design. Anyone familiar with the previous layout would be completely disoriented because so many things have been rearranged. The stripping and sorting areas have been moved to a larger space. So has the packing room. The aging rooms have their own corridors. All core-line Fuentes are produced in the "cathedral," which, as mentioned before, has its own lobby, antechamber and front entrance.

Production of the Don Carlos brand was temporarily diverted to other rolling sections but now, the new Don Carlos room is complete. The room is a tribute to the brand and right next to it, Fuente is building a *casita*, which means a cottage, or little house. It's a replica of the house he grew up in in Tampa. Fuente is eager to show it off, and it is indeed a quaint little structure with its corrugated metal roof, but he was unclear as to its functional purpose outside of it being an exhibit.

"I have so many plans. I'm going to see about giving different

brands their own aging rooms. That way I can micromanage the aging of every cigar," Fuente says excitedly.

The aging rooms have their own wings. Two halls flank the main walkway, and the rooms are unusually ornate. Understand that most factories have a single warehouse-sized space to serve as the aging room. Again, the orthodoxy of cigar manufacturing doesn't apply here. The norm means nothing. Fuente has constructed room after room to age different cigars in different conditions. Naturally, the aging rooms have an ambience and dignity of their own—floors are paved with picture tiles imported from Spain and Italy, the walls adorned with decorative brick work.

Despite all the changes, some things are staying the same. The aging rooms for both Don Carlos and Fuente Fuente OpusX are not being touched. Neither is the OpusX rolling room, where OpusX is made.

"That was not negotiable," insists Fuente, who sees no need to alter something simply for the sake of change. What was sacrosanct in the past stays sacrosanct.



Fuente's new Columbus room is dedicated to Christopher Columbus, the explorer credited with bringing tobacco to Europe. It's one of many new spaces in the expanded factory.

"I age OpusX differently than my other cigars," Fuente told CIGAR AFICIONADO in a 2015 interview. "I keep the doors closed so that they retain their flavors and age like a slow cooker."

Unlike Fuente's other aging rooms, where cigars are exposed on shelves, all Fuente Fuente OpusX cigars are shut in by cabinets.

Other rolling rooms are also staying the same. The Hemingway Room, where Hemingway brand cigars are made, isn't changing either. Nor is the room where Don Carlos Eye of the Sharks, CIGAR AFICIONADO's 2017 Cigar of the Year, are made. Only two people make that size, regardless of the high demand. That room, Fuente says, isn't going anywhere.

While Christopher Columbus might be vilified in the United States by a few activist groups, Fuente is honoring him. In another new wing, he's created a rolling gallery called the Columbus Room, which has about 50 rolling tables.



Top: Carlos “Carlito” Fuente Jr. in a new hall dedicated to aging rooms.
Below: Cigars rest inside one of the many new cavernous aging rooms.

The other facilities located in other parts of the free zone have been left alone. For the time being, Fuente’s focus is on the main compound.

Even though he’s created so many new rolling rooms and invested in such a buildout, Fuente isn’t really expanding production in any significant way. By the end of the year, he’s only looking to increase production by about 5 percent.

As to how much all of this cost, Fuente didn’t commit to a number and merely shakes his head at the question. He might not even be totally sure, but such things seem inconsequential. The sheer force of his personality suggests that cost is unimportant and completion is inevitable, no matter the dollar amount.

If the confluence of beauty and function are the indication of an enlightened civilization, then Fuente is, once again, ahead of his time. Recall how he defied the skeptics of the cigar world by growing wrapper in the Dominican Republic. And how he used that wrapper to create the strong and powerful Fuente Fuente OpusX when there was no demand for spicy, full-bodied smokes, not to mention

the unprecedented demand for the OpusX at the time of its release. In retrospect, OpusX is only a part of the story.

Through the twists and turns and cavernous corridors, Fuente points out the onsite medical center he’s building in the event of workplace injuries.

Eventually he circles back to the main lobby and points to an empty room. Fuente’s toying with the idea of serving dry-cured meats and cheese in there. It will probably happen.

“I feel like the sands in the hourglass are running out quickly,” says the 63-year-old. “I don’t want to regret having never done this.”

On the walls hang paintings of his father, the late Carlos Fuente Sr., who passed away in 2016. The two worked together for decades. The images are the idyllic representations of the man who Fuente Jr. looked up to the most.

“Every day I ask myself what my father would say if he was still alive,” he says as he looks at the painting. “And I know what the answer would be. He’d say, ‘You’re crazy,’ but he’d back me up on everything.”

It becomes clear that the whole operation is a tribute to his father, and a giant shrine to his heritage and to his entire family history, which has more than 100 years in cigar making.

“It’s not about cigars, it’s about people,” Fuente Jr. says. “I owe it to my employees to give them a beautiful environment. When they come here, I don’t want them to say that they’re going to work. I want them to feel like they’re coming home.”

Fuente Jr. expects the new factory to be complete by the end of the year. The grandeur and scale raise a question or two: What creative avenues will be left once this cigar-making Shangri-La is finished? Is it possible in the cigar business to have done it all? Maybe the questions are rhetorical. Maybe that little replica of his modest childhood home in Tampa is supposed to serve as a reminder of how far he’s come. Or an example of persistence and hard work. Whatever the case, this new grand factory, even unfinished, has already begun to take on a life of its own. ❖



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The Philadelphia Cricket Club	Flourtown, PA	7/16/18	\$1,000
Sahalee Country Club	Sammamish, WA	7/30/18	\$650
Conway Farms Golf Club	Lake Forest, IL	8/20/18	\$950
CordeValle Golf Club	San Martin, CA	8/30/18	\$950
Harbour Town Golf Links	Hilton Head Island, SC	9/10/18	\$650
TPC Potomac at Avenel Farm	Potomac, MD	9/10/18	\$950
Windsong Farm Golf Club	Maple Plain, MN	9/17/18	\$550
Trump National Golf Club Bedminster	Bedminster, NJ	9/18/18	\$950
The Club at Carlton Woods	The Woodlands, TX	10/1/18	\$600

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CIGAR AFICIONADO editor and publisher Marvin R. Shanken, center, enjoys a cigar with Elizabeth and Facundo Bacardi.



Cigarmakers Rafael Nodal, left, and A.J. Fernandez, right, chat with Leonor Abzaradel over cigars.



Jorge Padrón and his wife, Beba, puff on their cigars out on the patio.



Vanessa Mota and Raymond Teixeira are all smiles with premium cigars in hand.

Big Smoke Returns To Miami

The excitement was palpable as the enthusiastic crowd, each armed with prized cigars in hand, strolled out onto the patio of the Fontainebleau Miami Beach hotel on March 16. Basking in the warm night air, surrounded by palm trees and an endless view of the ocean, each lit up his or her smoke, because after all, it was CIGAR AFICIONADO's second annual Big Smoke Miami.

While a band playing Cuban jazz set a lively tone, cigar stars such as Rocky Patel handed out cigars and snapped photos with their fans. Jorge Padrón of Padrón Cigars, La Flor Dominicana's Litto Gomez, Ernesto Perez-Carrillo of EPC Cigar, Alan Rubin and a host of other big cigar industry names traded smokes for tickets.

Bacardi kept the guests' thirst at bay with tasty cocktail stations, plus Dewar's, D'Ussé Cognac, Bacardi 8 rum and icy cold

Hatuey beer. Hennessy was also pouring Cognac, and John Drew Brands was on hand with its line of spirits as well.

The cigar brands on hand included: Aging Room, A.J. Fernandez, Alec Bradley, Arturo Fuente, Casa Fernandez, Cohiba, Cornelius & Anthony, Diamond Crown, Don Pepin Garcia, E.P. Carrillo, El Artista, Hamlet, Joya de Nicaragua, La Aroma de Cuba, La Aurora, La Flor Dominicana, La Palina, MBombay Gaaja, Macanudo, Micallef, Nat Cicco, Nub, Oliva, Padrón, Plasencia, Regius, Rocky Patel, Romeo y Julieta, Tatuaje, Trinidad Santiago, Undercrown, Ventura and Villiger. ♦

By Andrew Nagy

The next Big Smoke takes place in Las Vegas. The multiday event begins on November 9. Visit cigaraficionado.com for details.

moments to remember

Please send all submissions to: CIGAR AFICIONADO/Moments to Remember, Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10019. Or email them to: momentstoremember@mshanken.com. To order additional copies of CIGAR AFICIONADO, call 1-800-344-0763.



CIGAR AFICIONADO editor and publisher Marvin R. Shanken, center left, enjoys a round of golf and premium cigars with, from left, George Koehler, Bill Terlato, and basketball legend Michael Jordan at The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida.



On a trip to England, Abraham Baboujian of Toronto, Canada, center, visits Davidoff of London to light up a premium cigar in the good company of long-time shop owner Edward Sahakian, left, and his son Eddie Sahakian, right.



The "Friday Group" of New York takes its annual wine tour trip to Tuscany. At the Antinori winery in Florence, Italy, the gentlemen paired fine wines with Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series and Fuente Fuente OpusX cigars.



Friends Jim Baughn of Lincoln, California, and Grove Newcomb of Sebago, Maine, pay a visit to the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana, where they sample the local fare of rum and cigars on the hotel's veranda.



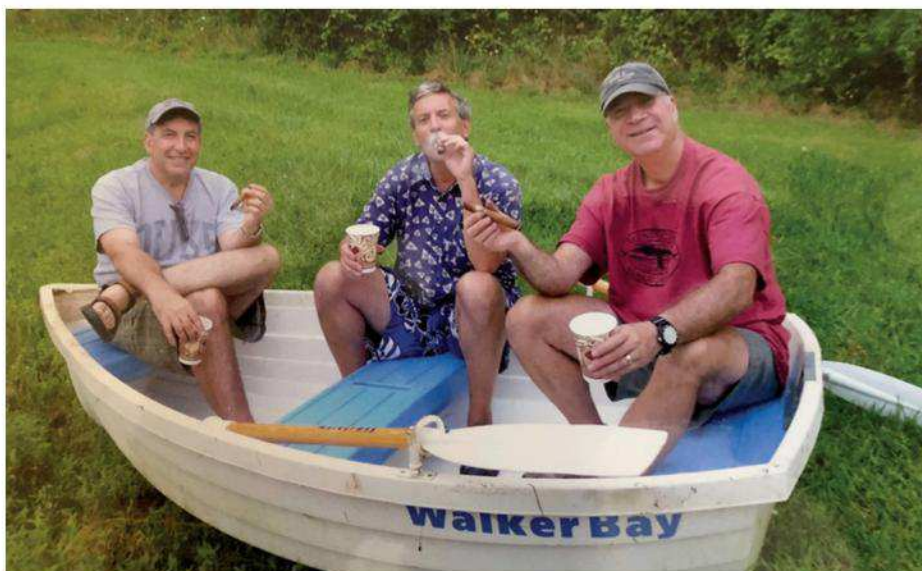
On their wedding day, newlyweds Addison and Katie Blackwell, left and center, share a special cigar moment with Katie's brother, Chris Loperfido, during a memorable reception at the Emerson Park Pavilion in Auburn, New York.



It certainly was a smoky wedding reception for Anthony Parziale and his new wife Vicky Ferrara. Here, the couple savors premium cigars with Dawn Strain at their cigar-themed after-party at the Bourne Mansion in Oakdale, New York.



Celebrating the marriage of Kerry and Andrew Ayala, from left, Peggy and Tom Sullivan, Jonathan Drew, Steve and Roseanne Kallinikos, the bride and groom, Marvin Samel and Nish Patel.



Cousins Dr. Marc Applestein, Dr. Brian Balin and Abe Wasserberger sip single malt Scotch whisky and puff on premium cigars from Rocky Patel while on vacation in West Virginia.



Jim Rogers, Joe Falcone, Ricky Hay, Dave Valaro, Paul Benson, Ed Boone, Chris Maron, Gerry Conney, John Ceriello and Sean Ridgway light up cigars before the NFC Championship game.



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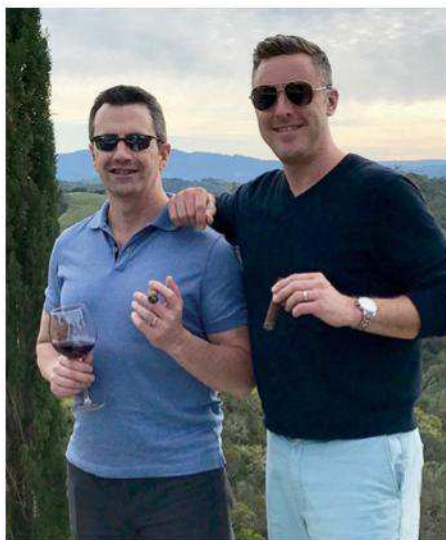
At the end of their 2,189.1-mile hike up the Appalachian Trail, David Wood and Bob Hein savor the moment with premium cigars atop Mount Katahdin in Northeast Piscataquis, Maine.



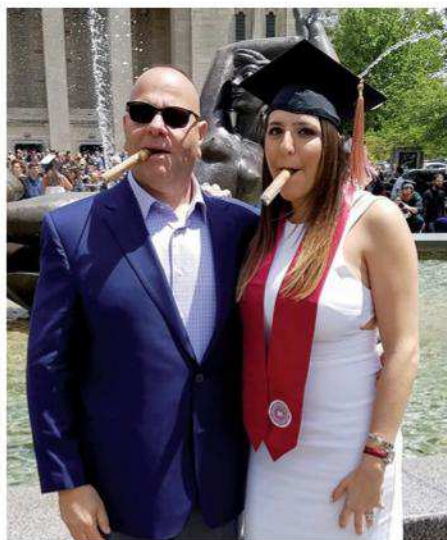
Dan Bednar starts off his bachelor party the right way, by lighting up cigars with Aaron Kooping, Corban McCammon, David Bednar, Brian Hoppe and Kevin Kaczowski in Waukesha, Wisconsin.



Joel Starks and Mike Wees, co-owners of Corona Club at the Meadows in Rochester, Minnesota, indulge in the pleasures of a handmade cigar to commemorate the grand opening of their club.



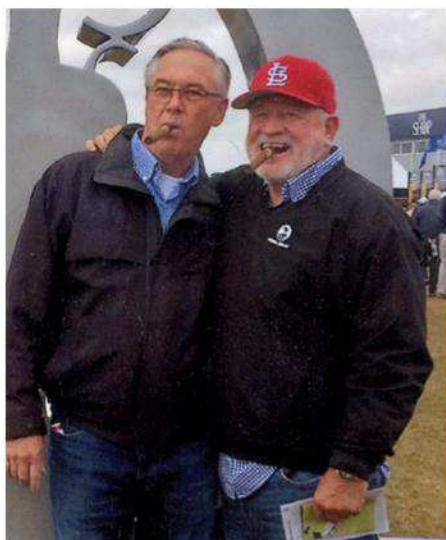
Mike Donelon and his brother-in-law Tom Schroeder take in a spectacular view of Napa Valley while savoring Cohiba Maduro cigars.



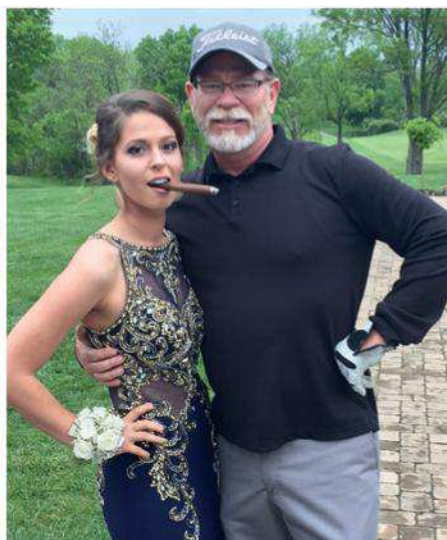
Marisa Cristina and her father Michael celebrate Marisa's graduation from Indiana University with a couple of Rocky Patel cigars.



Samantha Smith spends quality time with her father Jeff as they prepare to light up Xikar cigars before her wedding ceremony at the Bingham-Waggoner Estate in Independence, Missouri.



Bob Tippet and Gary Mantei enjoy fine cigars at the 2017 Open Championship at Royal Birkdale Golf Club in Southport, England.



Mike Brenner of Reading, Ohio, plays golf as daughter Kylee takes prom pictures at the same course. Both occasions call for a cigar.

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Ernest Hemingway



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Adam Tihany celebrates his 70th birthday at La Réserve Paris Hotel and Spa in France. Seated: Amir Nahai, Nir Adar, Alessia Genova, Jan Goessing, Francesco Antonucci, Nathan Joseph. Standing: Jacob Gershoni, Edgar Cullman Jr., Lilo Raspalesi, Jim Smith, Adam Tihany, Kristina Rezini, Fred Hochberg, Ami Federmann, Thomas Keller, Michael Frey, Robert Schoenthal and Gordon Mott.



Joseph Richards, John Smith, Julio Garcia, Jim Smith, David Barnett and Steve Gardner celebrate 20 years of fishing on Montana's Bitterroot River with Macanudo cigars and Cognac.



The COWBOYS (Cigars On Wednesday Boys) doing what they do best: puffing on premium cigars while representing their club in the annual Electric Light Parade in Prescott, Arizona.



Bill Valentine, Charley Afflitto, Janelle Powles, Bud Powles, James Ewing, Mike Murrah and Tom Arpin attend a meeting of the John's Pass, Florida, Social/Cigar Club in St. Petersburg, Florida.



Russ Smith spends his 80th birthday observing the art of hand-rolled cigars at the Don Lucas Cigar Factory in the Dominican Republic with Will Culpepper, Steve Courter, Luke Dean and John Dean.



Frank, Mike and David Ciccone spark up a few My Father cigars on a sunny New England afternoon to commemorate the baptism of Mike's daughter Aria Grace in Dedham, Massachusetts.

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The Waterwheel Cigar Crew of Amelia Island, Florida, light up Don Carlos cigars to celebrate what would have been Carlos Fuente Sr.'s 82nd birthday.



Vicki Baratta commemorates her graduation from Sacramento State University in Sacramento, California, by enjoying a cigar with her proud father Joseph.



Ron Pisnoy, Jeff Howard, George Bausewein and Richard O'Brien of the "On Top Of The World" cigar club conduct their weekly meeting in Ocala, Florida.



Hector Luis Pagán, David Navedo and Ray Castro of the salsa band Conjunto Clásico relax with premium cigars after a successful tour in Cali, Colombia.



Mike Sullivan and Jon Chiz add a little good life flair to their sister-in-law's 50th birthday party by lighting up Cuban Cohiba cigars in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Friends Ben Gallo and Michael Inforzato savor OpusX cigars at Villanova University after the men's basketball team won the NCAA Championship.

CIGAR AFICIONADO (ISSN #1063-7885) is published bimonthly by M. Shanken Communications, Inc., Worldwide Plaza, 825 Eighth Avenue, 33rd floor, New York, NY 10019. (212) 684-4224. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Address changes and subscription inquiries: CIGAR AFICIONADO, P.O. Box 37367 Boone, IA 50037-0367; call 1-800-365-4929; or email cgacustserv@cdsfulfillment.com. Subscription rates: United States, \$24.95 per year; Canada, \$38.00 per year; all other foreign, \$56.00. Subscriptions are payable in U.S. funds. TO ORDER A NEW SUBSCRIPTION, call 1-800-992-2442, email cgacustserv@cdsfulfillment.com, or write to aforementioned Boone address. To order back issues, call 1-800-761-4099. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned, and no responsibility can be assumed for such material. All "Letters to the Editor" should be sent to the editor at the aforementioned New York address. All rights in letters sent to CIGAR AFICIONADO will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and subject to CIGAR AFICIONADO's unrestricted right to edit. CIGAR AFICIONADO® is a registered trademark of M. Shanken Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing may be reprinted or reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher. Copyright © 2017, M. Shanken Communications, Inc. To sell CIGAR AFICIONADO call: 1-800-344-0763.



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1 PERFECT STORM—HI-POWER CYCLES

Typhoon Pro is the answer for off-road bikers who like to hit the trail silently, but appreciate a little help on the uphill half. This dirt bike from Hi-Power Cycles incorporates the extra oomph of an e-bike. Hand-assembled and signed by the craftsman who built it in Los Angeles, the Typhoon Pro is powered by a 6,000-watt motor (starting at \$11,500), which is upgradable to a 7,000-watt level. Features include Magura MT7 quad piston hydraulic disc brakes and custom-tuned suspension. hi-powercycles.com

2 THE CIGAR GLASS—CORKSICLE

Cocktail parties present a challenge: how do you juggle the things you ingest while still working the room? The Cigar Glass has you covered on at least two fronts. With one hand you hold your drink and cigar (which is slid into the convenient, built-in rest on the side of the double old-fashioned glass. Now, wandering around you can still press flesh. The heavy-duty glass also insulates the drink from the cigar. Now they just need to incorporate a plate for canapés. corksicle.com

3 SLEEK SLIPPERS—MOUNT STREET

If your image of slippers is the oversized, fluffy variety that no grown man would wear, think again. London's Mount Street Shoe Company makes stylish models that you wouldn't be embarrassed to be seen in. Founder Nigel Siwani started by personalizing the whimsical slippers with images of his passions: cigars (you can have your initials on the band), cocktails and watches. You can also get hookahs, animals or whatever you want, with custom embroidering. The Martini-glass embroidery glows in dim light. mountstreetshoecompany.com

4 GIVE IT A SPIN—VSPIN

You've discovered a tannic, young Shiraz you're just dying to introduce to friends, but just before guests arrive you discover you've forgotten to decant it in time to breathe for the customary four hours and remove the rough edges. Not to worry. The vSpin decanting system can do the job in 5 minutes. It combines a vortex wine aeration system with a Spiegelau crystal decanter. Not to mention, it's cool to watch. You just pour the wine, press a button and the gentle action of the vSpin does the work. vspin.com

5 THE TROUTDOORSMAN—MAN CRATES

Still looking for the right dad or grad gift? A powerful statement that says “man” right on it? Man Crates packages masculine gifts in style (they come in a wood crate). The newest selection is The Troutdoorsman, with a lined, canvas creel, fixed blade filet knife, grill holder, recipe book and trout seasoning. Other gift themes for dudes include drinking (e.g., cocktails, whiskey and beer), eating (grilling and bacon, naturally) and sports. Some personalization available. mancrates.com

6 A TASTE OF JAPAN—BOKKSU

Danny Taing grew up in New Jersey, but the four years he spent in Japan instilled a deep love for the nation's distinctive snacks. His company Bokksu delivers monthly boxes packed with a rotating menu of Japanese cookies, teas and other snacks, from butter senbei rice crackers to freeze dried strawberries. A recent order for 10,000 rice crackers from a grandfather in Kyoto took two months to produce. Some of the snack makers Bokksu works with have been making their signature delicacies for nearly 500 years. Prices range from \$16 to \$39 per box. bokksu.com

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